

## Love, Dream

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## Love, Dream

by [nikigairu](#)

### Summary

"I don't want to end up hurting you!" George yelled out desperately. Clay fell silent then, his eyes becoming unreadable to George. A wry smile made itself present on his features as he shook his head in what appeared to be disappointment.

"You're hurting me right now," Clay replied softly, and George wasn't a stranger to the underlying hurt present in his voice. He felt the guilt eating away at him, making George turn away from that forlorn expression.

"Better now than six months in the future, don't you think?" George muttered lowly.

(In which George is an exchange student that will be living abroad for six months, Dream decides it would be funny to send the new British boy an obscure email on his first day of school, and neither prepare for the feelings that develop because of it.)

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Summary

Four boys and one girl arrive in America.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Are you nervous?"

George glanced down to his right to meet wide, brown eyes peering up at him.

"A little bit," he admitted as the slightly shorter boy began jumping in place a bit beside him.

"I'm so so nervous, I think I'm about to combust!"

"Stop hopping on the escalator, Tubbo, you'll end up breaking it," a voice right behind them scolded. George and Tubbo glanced back and up at the tall boy standing behind them that would've been menacing due to his height and the added fact that he was a step above them as they made their descent, but the yellow sweater, round glasses and black beanie made him seem non-threatening and almost huggable.

At least, George thought it was a yellow sweater.

"Sorry, Wilbur, I just feel so jittery!" Tubbo played with the collar of his own yellow shirt (or was it supposed to be green? George couldn't tell), then at the straps of his backpack, his expression still displaying the same nervousness as before.

"Ignore him, Tubbo, let's break this thing," the boy standing beside Wilbur suddenly proclaimed before he grabbed hold of the straps of his backpack and began hopping up and down on the step. George felt the escalator shaking a bit as Wilbur began yelling at the blonde boy still jumping while cackling like a maniac.

"Tommy, stop it right now!" Wilbur ordered as he grabbed hold of his shoulders to hold him still.

"You can't touch me, Wilbur, that is harassment. I'm calling my lawyer."

"You don't have a lawyer, Tommy."

"Yes I do, it's Big Law right here," Tommy gestured towards Tubbo as he puffed out his chest proudly.

"I am a lawyer."

"No you are not."

"Yes I am. I am the law."

George noticed they were almost at the bottom of the escalator and quickly pointed it out to the others, who finally settled down as they stepped off of it at the bottom.

"Hold on guys, wait for Niki," Wilbur said before anyone could start walking away. The four of them watched as Niki made it to the bottom of the escalator as well, as she had been several steps above them. She smiled at them apologetically as she trotted a bit to catch up, her boots clicking on the floor as she readjusted the straps of her overall.

"Do you need help carrying that?" Wilbur asked when she caught up with them. She glanced down at her carrier bag that was visibly stuffed to the brim before shaking her head and smiling up at him, tucking a strand of blonde hair that had fallen on her face behind her ear.

"It's okay, Wil, I can carry it. Besides, you have your own bag to worry about," she tapped his own carrier bag lightly as Wilbur shrugged and responded with an "If you say so" before they began walking towards the baggage carousel to get the rest of their luggage.

"Simp," Tommy snickered under his breath so only Tubbo and George could hear. Tubbo let out a laugh as George rolled his eyes but smiled fondly. They proceeded to follow the pair already some ways ahead of them.

·☺◁▷◁◁◁☺·

"Are you friends with georgenotfound?"

George perked up at the use of the username he has for practically everything and spotted a boy, probably taller than him but not taller than Tommy, standing in front of the loud Brit. Tommy let out a thunderous laugh at the question, drowned out by the chatter of the families and friends reuniting or meeting up at the airport, before glancing over to George and pointing at the boy that had asked the question, an amused smile on his face.

"George! This guy asked me if I'm friends with 'georgenotfound!'" Tommy yelled at him before he fell into another round of hysterical laughter. George walked over to the two, making sure not to hit anyone with the carry on luggage he was pulling behind him.

The boy that had asked the question turned towards George now, recognition lighting up his face. He was wearing a multicolored hoodie with a yellow (green?) swirl in the center that had been what first caught George's eye. The boy lifted up a white board George hadn't noticed he had been holding, with the words "georgenotfound" scrawled on it in black marker.

"I'm going to be your host family! Welcome to America!" He grinned widely, now stretching out his hand for George to take. He shook it, the boy shaking it a bit too aggressively.

"Oh, are you Karl Jacobs?" George asked, remembering the name of the boy that was going to be hosting him for the next six months. Karl nodded excitedly.

"The one and only. I can't wait to get to know you better, georgenotfound!"

"Excuse me, why does this twat keep calling you georgenotfound," Tommy finally spoke up, ignoring the offended "Hey!" from Karl. George merely shrugged before Karl spoke up again.

"That's your email! It was on your student file thingy, I don't know what it's called, but I saw your email georgenotfound@gmail.com and thought it was pretty neat," he explained, pushing the brown locks falling just above his eyes to a side only for them to flop back into place.

"Yeah, that's the username I use for most things," George explained sheepishly as he rubbed the back of his neck.

"Tommy, I found our host family!" he heard Tubbo call out from somewhere in the crowd.

"More like you barreled into me, you muffin," an unfamiliar voice responded, but George didn't catch sight from who it had come from. Tommy patted George's shoulder, bringing his attention back up at the British boy.

"I guess this is farewell, georgenotfound. Until next time," Tommy stated dramatically with the most serious expression he could muster.

"Don't be so dramatic and go. I'll see you on Monday," George rolled his eyes while trying to bite back a smile, one that he wasn't able to hold back when Tommy's own wide grin broke through. He saluted before walking away towards the direction Tubbo and the host family taking them both in probably were. George turned back to Karl, who had been waiting for him patiently with the same genuine and awfully contagious smile he had on before.

"Ready to go, Georgie?" he bounced a bit in place as George gave him a shy smile in return at the new nickname.

"Sure, let's go."

·▷◁◁·

George was walking with Karl and his mom, who had been nice enough to offer to carry some of his luggage, through the airport. Karl was going on about how they would be sharing a room and to ignore his brother Sean when they got home because he thinks it would be funny, but George was only half paying attention. He couldn't help but peer around at everything around him, most stores foreign to him as they did not have them back in England.

He had been staring at a restaurant named 'Chili's' that he didn't notice someone running in his direction and ended up colliding right into them. Due to the heavy backpack still on his back, he let out a small shriek as he lost his balanced and toppled backwards, the person that had accidentally tackled him landing on top. He heard Karl squeak in surprise and Karl's mom gasp before moving to make sure the two of them were okay.

"Oh shit, I am so so so sorry," an unfamiliar voice with a heavy American accent said. George blinked up at a boy getting up and off of him.

"I shouldn't have been running, I'm just late to pick up the family I'm supposed to be hosting and- wait, why am I even telling a stranger this. He doesn't care, shut up," the boy started muttering to himself as he stood up, shaking his head at his own rambling and dusting himself off.

George continued to peer up at the boy, still half laying on the floor. He had dirty blonde hair and a light complexion, freckles dusting his cheeks that had been more clear when he had been practically inches away from his own face. He had noticed he had yellow eyes- but yellow eyes aren't a thing. So green eyes? Probably green eyes. The yellow hoodie he had on (was it really yellow?) was visibly a bit dirty now.

The boy outstretched his hand, offering it to George. He took it after a moments hesitation and was

hoisted back up to his feet.

"Thanks, and I should've been paying attention where I was going, too," George shrugged as the boy shook his head.

"No way, my fault," he insisted, his own hand reaching up to ruffle his own blonde locks a bit.

"Oh, Clay!" Karl said suddenly, seemingly recognizing the boy that had crashed into George a second prior. Clay turned towards him and a bright smile lighting up his face as he recognized Karl in turn.

"Karl! Hey dude, how has your break been."

"It's been good, especially now since, you know, I'm picking up the kid I'm going to be hosting," he said as he pointed in George's direction. George decided to ignore the 'kid' bit in favor of realizing he was being introduced.

"Oh, so you are one of the exchange students," Clay noted, not so subtly looking George up and down. "Explains the accent."

"Yeah, this is georgenotfound," Karl stated as he wrapped an arm over George's shoulder. George tensed a bit, still not used to how friendly and outgoing Karl seemed to be with new people.

"Georgenotfound?" Clay repeated, his smile widening more so as he glanced at George, clearly amused. George felt his face flush slightly, starting to feel a bit embarrassed of the username with the amount of times it had been pointed out just that day.

"He got that from my email. It's just George," George waved him off as Clay's amused grin only broadened.

"Okay, georgenotfound. Since I'm meeting you, doesn't it mean you are found, though?" George huffed exasperatedly at Clay's lame attempt at a joke, the latter chuckling at his own humor. "I'm Clay."

"Nice to meet you, too, Clay," George drawled sarcastically, making Clay let out a short laugh. George fought back the smile threatening to ruin the unimpressed look he was going for.

"Hey Clay, where's the student you're supposed to be hosting?" Karl spoke up, the reminder making Clay's eyes widen.

"Shit! Right, that's what I was doing! Agggghhh I am so late and I keep getting sidetracked-" Clay screeched, beginning to run away. "See you guys! And nice to meet you, georgenotfound!"

"It's George!" George yelled back as Clay let out a loud wheeze, his laughter fading as he booked it down the hall.

"Are all Americans this annoying," George deadpanned, causing Karl to let out a laugh that sounded like a mix between Pennywise's laugh and Spongebob's. It made George finally crack a smile as they continued to walk towards the parking lot, George glancing back down the hall one last time to see Clay was already out of sight.

That's it for the prologue! I've written fics before, but never based off of real people.

Sorry if anyone's OOC, It's probably on purpose since I'm basing it more off of their Minecraft personas/skins than the real people and allowing myself some creative liberty to not make it too weird.

Anyways, I have an idea of where I want to take this, but most of it is going to be improvised. Feel free to give me ideas in the comments of what you guys want to see and I might just include them! (I will give you credit, no worries)

Thanks for considering reading this story and hope you enjoy it as much as I am enjoying writing it <3

- Kirbs -

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

George receives an email.

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Hey Claydoh!"

"Don't call me that."

"I missed you Claydoh."

"Stop."

Clay turned to give a playful glare at Nick as he let out a wicked cackle.

"You love me, man."

"I do not," Clay huffed, but they both knew the opposite was true. He swung his locker door shut, revealing an incredibly tall boy standing at the other side of Clay.

"Oh hey, are you the exchange student staying at Clay's house?" Nick asked as he leaned on the row of lockers. The boy moved around Clay to extend a hand towards Nick, who took it and shook it.

"I am. I'm Wilbur Soot, pleasure to meet you."

"Likewise. I'm Nick."

"Everyone calls him Sapnap, though," Clay chuckled as he, too, leaned his weight on the locker. Sapnap rolled his eyes so hard they practically went into the back of his head.

"That is actually so dumb. I still don't even understand how that caught on so fast," Sapnap scoffed as he crossed his arms. Clay let out a short laugh.

"Oh come on now, you know. Cause of that one time you mispronounced pandas so bad, remember? You were saying words backwards because you're 'so good at that,' and for the word 'pandas' you said 'sapnap' instead of 'sadnap.' You messed up in front of the whole football team, no less," Clay let out a wheeze as Sapnap told him to shut up.

"That is an...interesting sequence of events," Wilbur said, obviously confused but pretending to understand. Clay patted his shoulder, not very used to people being taller than him.

"It's okay, sometimes I don't understand him either. He's kind of weird, but I stick around cause I feel bad for him," Clay said solemnly, making Sapnap lightly smack his head as Clay let out another wheeze. Wilbur, at least, cracked a smile.

The first bell rang just then, signaling 10 minutes until classes would start.

"C'mon ladies, let's get to class, shall we?" Sapnap tried a British accent, but it ended up sounding more Irish. Wilbur let out a short laugh at his failed attempt while the three of them made their way to their home room class.



"Karl!"

"Sapnap!"

George watched as Karl shot out of his chair beside him and launched himself at the boy that had just walked through the doorway. Karl practically tackled him in a hug, the other laughing and giving him a tight squeeze before spinning him around as Karl let out another chortle. He noticed the boy had dark brown hair, nearly black, and his skin seemed to be tanned possibly from hours in the sun. He wore a white shirt with what he assumed was supposed to be a flame on the center as well as black ripped pants and checkered converse.

"Get a room," someone said behind the two. George realized it was the same boy he had (literally) ran into at the airport the day before.

"You're just jealous you don't have what we have, Clay," the boy with the flame shirt scoffed as he dramatically fell backwards into Karl's arms, who just barely caught him and dipped him dramatically.

"Trueeeee," Karl agreed as he lifted flame boy back up.

"George, hey," a familiar voice said, making George direct his attention to Wilbur who had been standing at the doorway waiting to go inside. George grinned and waved at him, relaxing a bit after seeing a familiar face. At being mentioned, flame boy, Karl, and Clay directed their attention to George, and that second of relief was short lived.

"Georgenotfound!" Clay quipped with a broad smile. George noticed he was wearing the same piss-colored hoodie he had sported the previous day except it wasn't visibly dirty anymore.

George's smile dropped as he raised an unimpressed eyebrow at him, and yet somehow Clay only smiled wider.

"Uh dude. What? 'Georgenotfound'?" Flame boy asked, looking between the two in confusion. Karl wrapped an arm around the boy and lead him towards George's table, grinning widely.

"Sappitinus Nappitus, this is Georgie. Georgie, Sappy Nappy," Karl pointed between them as both boys looked at Karl unimpressed.

"It's George, actually. And he had gotten georgenotfound from my email," George said, feeling as though he was repeating himself at this point. 'Sappy Nappy' flashed him a smile.

"I'm Nick. My friends started calling me Sapnap, though, and Karl over here likes to get creative," he drawled, poking Karl's side which caused him to let out a squeak. "Feel free to call me Sapnap."

"Will do," George responded, just as the teacher called everyone to their seats. He watched as the people standing up moved to sit down, catching Wilbur's eye and exchanging a smile with him



before he sat down near the front. Karl sat down in the table beside George again and Sappnap on Karl's other side. Apart from them, the faces in the classroom were all foreign to him, making him feel another wave of nerves.

Actually, scratch that. There was also Clay.

Clay sat down in the table beside Wilbur, next to one of the large windows in the classroom. George watched him whip out his phone under the table, probably hiding it from the teacher's eye, before he started texting someone. George mentally rolled his eyes at the sight and hid his amused smile with his hand before facing the front just as the teacher mentioned the student exchange program.

"As you all know, we have a student exchange program that will go on for the next six months. Some of our students are going to be studying abroad, and thus we have some students from England here with us today. I believe two of those students are in this class right now," she nodded towards Wilbur and then at George, who gave her an awkward wave, not knowing what else to do.

He felt multiple eyes on him, but the gaze he met was Clay's, who was no longer not-so-subtly staring at his phone. George raised an eyebrow at him only for Clay to mimic the little wave he had given the teacher except more exaggerated. George felt his face flush. Without thinking, he stuck his tongue out at him, a reaction Clay probably had not expect because he let out a snort he quickly covered with his hand. George broke into a grin he wasn't able to contain, making Clay's own smile broaden before they both turned back towards the front.

"You will probably be meeting the other exchange students in your next few periods or in between classes, so just remember to be nice and give them a warm welcome," the teacher finished before she turned back towards the board behind her, writing a list of page numbers. "Now, if everyone will please open your books to page 243."

·🌀◀▶◻▶🌀·

Simpnap [09:08]

Claydohhh

Clay [09:08]

What's up

Simpnap [09:09]

how did you know georgenotfound?

Clay [09:10]

I went to the airport too remember

Simpnap [09:10]

oh shit trueeee

Clay [09:10]

You're so dumb lmao

Simpnap [09:13]

ayo ur kinda staring at him rn

Simpnap [09:15]

did u just make fun of his wave

Simpnap [09:15]

it was a very cute wave dont make fun of it

Clay [09:17]

Simp

Simpnap [09:17]

wha how

Simpnap [09:18]

ur the only man i simp for ;)

Clay [09:18]

I'm telling Karl

Simpnap [09:18]

wait shit thats true he exists

Simpnap [09:18]

nooooo

Simpnap [09:19]

he will divorce me and i will cry

Clay [09:19]

Good.

Simpnap [09:19]

>:(

Clay [09:19]

>:)

Clay [09:20]

Wait dude can you do me a favor

Simpnap [09:20]

only if u dont divorce me n karl

Clay [09:20]

Fine

Clay [09:20]

Can you ask Karl what George's email is

Simpnap [09:21]

Like I know it's georgenotfound but the stuff after the @

Simpnap [09:21]

ok sure what for

Clay [09:22]

I have an idea

Clay [09:22]

Don't tell him I asked ok?

·👉👈·

Sapnap read the last text, curious as to what Clay was up to. He looked up at the teacher, thankful her back was still facing the class as she wrote something on the board. He turned towards Karl and reached over to tap his table a few times, getting his attention.

"What's George's email?" Sapnap whispered, just loud enough so only Karl would hear. Karl looked at him questioningly, so Sapnap quickly lied, "I want to send him the syllabus for each class in case he needs it."

"Georgenotfound@gmail.com," he cited, trying to be quiet but being a little louder than intended. Thankfully only a few students heard, glancing their way, none of which were George.

"Thanks. Love you," Sapnap winked as Karl giggled a bit, his hand coming up to cover his smile before turning back to the book in front of him. Sapnap glanced back at the teacher before turning towards his phone and sending Clay the email.

Sapnap [09:29]

georgenotfound@gmail.com

Claydoh

[09:30]

Thank u!

Sapnap [09:30]

so what're u gonna do

Claydoh

[09:30]

Secret ;)

Sapnap looked up at Clay, who glanced back to flash him a mischievous smile. He mouthed "bruh," to which Clay merely grinned innocently and batted his eyelashes at him before turning to the book he knew he wasn't going to read anyway. He rolled his eyes and turned towards his own book, not exactly reading it either.



The rest of George's day went more smoothly than expected. He had several classes with Tommy and Tubbo, though he had yet to meet who was the brave soul hosting the two of them together, and he had a few classes with Niki as well scattered throughout the day, but didn't meet who was hosting her either. Unfortunately, he only had homeroom with Wilbur, so the only other time he got to see him was during lunch when all the exchange students decided to eat together on the bleachers of the American football field. He would have to watch a game one day because he wasn't sure how American football worked. The only football he knew was the one where you kicked a ball into a goal.

He spent practically every other moment with Karl, and he was starting to get accustomed to his hyper-activity. He saw Sapnap a few times because of Karl and had a few classes with him, so he could see them potentially becoming friends. Several people went up to introduce themselves to him and welcome him, and some tried to make small talk despite George just wanting to avoid any more social interactions than he was already having to deal with, but he tried to be nice and humor them as much as he knew how. He had already forgotten most of their names and who was who anyway.

He didn't see Clay for the rest of the day.

Not that he wanted to see Clay, he was just becoming a semi-familiar face, and he really needed as many of those as he could get right now.

"How do you like the school so far, Georgie?" Karl spoke up next to him. George was pulled out of his thoughts before looking over at Karl, who was currently sitting in the driver's seat and absentmindedly tapping on the steering wheel, waiting for the light to turn green.

"It's not bad, I like it. And I had a good day, actually," he smiled over at him as the light finally turned green and the car started moving again. "Well, for the most part. I was a little overwhelmed with the amount of people that wanted to talk to me, but it wasn't terrible, I suppose."

"Ooooh, is Georgie popular already~?" Karl sing-songed, his eyes still on the road. "It's understandable, though. Anyone would want to talk to the cute British boy with the cute accent and

the even cuter face."

George and Karl shared a knowing smile before they both burst into a fit of giggles.

"You think I'm cute?" George said in a joking voice, his voice pitching higher on purpose as he tucked nonexistent strands of hair behind his ear.

"Most definitely. The cutest in all the land," Karl declared with a wink, before they both started laughing again.

Once they got back to Karl's house, George plopped down on the bed Karl's mom had set up for him in Karl's room. He then whipped out his laptop to check for school assignments and emails.

George had several expectations when he signed up for the student exchange program that would have him abroad for six months. He expected the new faces, the foreign places and sports, even the different way of teaching.

What he didn't expect, however, was to receive an email from a stranger just two days in.

He looked at the email address.

"dreamwastaken@gmail.com"

Huh.

## Chapter End Notes

Ok so reformatting writing from Wattpad to here is actually so annoying, like I had to entirely change how I'm going to be writing the text messages which means I'll have to do the same for the emails and just. Ugh. It looks so much prettier on Wattpad.

Anyways, this was surprisingly fun to write, and I don't hate it (I usually hate my writing so that's a nice change of pace). Feel free to leave any ideas I can include or theories as to what's going to happen next ;)

Also, I am thinking of having an upload schedule just to keep things consistent. I will let you guys know in the next update what I decide.

Love every single person reading this! Remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated <3

- Kirbs -

## Chapter 3

### Chapter Summary

George and the mysterious stranger email back and forth.

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

George stared at the un-open email from the unknown recipient. He didn't use his email on too many websites, so he wasn't constantly spammed like other people, thus emails becoming more of a rarity and either were from school or from his friends messing around.

Maybe this was another prank from one of his friends back in England?

George was practically convinced this was true as he opened the email that conveniently had no subject either. He began reading, becoming more confused with every line.

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Greetings georgenotfound,

Thank you so much for making time out of your day to read this. I am emailing you in regards of your first day at the school you will be attending for the next six months here in the States. How was it? Did you feel welcomed? Threatened? Like eating cat shit would be a more adequate pastime than listening to Mrs. Saenz drone on and on about why the government here is currently a dumpster fire? Do you feel accepted, or do you wish someone would yeet you back to your home country? Please let me know, in excruciating detail, your experience. I will be waiting for your response.

Warm regards,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George read and reread the email, flabbergasted. This had to be a joke, and he had no doubt now that it was one of his buddies back home trying to act smart and mess with him and make him talk about his experience in the United States so far. With that in mind, he began typing out a response.

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

who are you

Reply Forward

He was already certain it was one of his friends, but he decided to play into their little game for now. He didn't even have to wait that long to get a response.

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

Straight to the point. I like it. But you did not answer my question.

Waiting for your response,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George stared at the email. He was stubborn to a fault, so he quickly typed his reply.

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

I won't answer your question until you tell me who you are. For all I know, you could be a 50 year old man with a beer belly trying to kidnap me and force me to drink expired milk

also why are you emailing so formally

Reply Forward

Another quick email back.

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

Unfortunately, I cannot reveal who I am yet. I can assure you, though, that I am not a 50 year old man with a beer belly trying to kidnap you and force you to drink expired milk. That is absolutely disgusting. Who does that.

I can, however, reveal that I am from the school you are currently attending. I have yet to speak to you, but I have watched you from afar. That sounds stalkery, I apologize, I am not a stalker. Do not call the cops.



Still waiting for your response,

Dream

P.S. I am emailing formally because I am actually getting educated when I go to school.

Reply Forward

George read the email, unimpressed. He knew the person behind the email was lying, so he emailed them back with the following.

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

if you're from this school, describe the place, in detail, even things nobody can know from just looking up the place online

Reply Forward

George sat back, smiling smugly and satisfied with himself. He knew this would stump the person and they would finally reveal themselves. They would have a laugh over their failed attempt to mess with him, and George would be able to go on with his night.

The person was taking longer to respond, so he slid off the bed to go downstairs to the kitchen, where Karl's mom was cooking and Karl was helping out.

"Hey, Georgie!" Karl grinned from where he was getting the silverware and plates ready with food. George said hello to him and Karl's mom, who gave him a sweet smile and a warm hello. Sean, Karl's brother, was half leaning on the kitchen island, watching them cook with a watery mouth, and briefly glanced his way to wave animatedly at him.

"Food will be ready in a bit, I'll call you over when it's ready," Karl's mom said before coming up to George and lightly pushing him out of the kitchen. George chuckled and let himself be walked out before making his way back up the stairs to Karl's bedroom.

To pass the time, he started unpacking more of his things. About an hour passed before his curiosity got the best of him.

A new email was waiting for him when he opened up his laptop again.

George had a triumphant grin when he opened it, one that immediately dropped as he read the email.

It contained a detailed description of the school, and although he had only the memories of the day to base it off of he knew it was accurate. There were descriptions of where most kids hung out, and what people did where, and even more crazy specific details that made it clear the person that had emailed him had not been lying.

It was definitely not his friends from England, he knew that now.

But then, who?

George racked his brain, thinking of every person who could have known his email. Karl knew his email, but he had been in the kitchen the entire time and wouldn't have had the time to send all of these emails. Sapnap and Clay vaguely knew about his email, but the person had said they had yet to talk to him. They could be lying, but they didn't lie about being from school so it was possible that wasn't a lie, either. That would also rule out the people that approached him today, and people have ways to get other's emails, which meant he truly had no idea who was behind it.

It made him feel a bit better that he knew, for sure, that they were at least a student.

Wait. Unless. Oh god.

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

please tell me you're a student from school and not a creepy janitor or teacher that happens to know everything students do somehow because they're a creepy middle aged pedo stalker

Reply Forward

It was possible okay.

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

I can assure you, I am not a creepy janitor or teacher that happens to know everything students do somehow because they're a creepy middle aged pedo stalker. I am a student. I have no way of proving this to you, so you'll just have to believe me.

Just reminding you you have yet to respond to the question from my first email,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George decided to believe them.

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

I will believe you. for now.

one last question, how did you get my email?

Reply Forward

The reply came in fast as if they had prepared for this question.

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

I asked a teacher for your email to be able to contact you. He was so happy I was attempting to reach out to you that he didn't even ask what for.

Answer the question please I'm tired and want to go to bed soon,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George didn't realize he had started smiling after reading the last bit. He sent them an email teasing them about how lame it was to have an early bed time, which made him receive an email defending their sleep schedule in return.

And another reminder to answer the first question they had asked.

George sighed and gave in, giving the person a short description about his day. He explained how he enjoyed it overall but felt a bit overwhelmed with the amount of people that had wanted to speak to him. He sent the email and waited.

Several minutes later, he got his response.

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

Thanks George. Glad you had a good day, and don't worry, that much attention would overwhelm anyone.

Can I email you again sometime?

I'm going to bed soon I don't care screw you,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George would die before he admitted he was full on smiling like an idiot at this point.

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

I said I would trust you for now, so I'll give you three chances to mess up tops before you lose that trust

Reply Forward

A response a minute later.

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Dear georgenotfound,

I accept those conditions. I will prove to you I am trustworthy, George, just you wait.

3 strikes and I'm out,  
Dream

Reply Forward

"Hey Georgie, watchu looking at?" Karl called from the doorway, making George startle as though he was caught doing something he wasn't supposed to.

"Oh, just..." George glanced at his open laptop before slowly closing it, letting out an awkward laugh. "Just chatting with my friends from England on Discord."

"Aw, I bet they miss you. Well, food is ready so c'mon Georgie," Karl grabbed hold of George's arm and began dragging him out of the room. George glanced back one last time at his laptop before biting back a smile.

·☺◁▷◻▷◻◁☺·

"By the way, has anyone sent you the syllabuses for each class yet?" Karl asked George as they walked towards the kitchen.

"No, actually."

Weird, Karl thought. Wasn't Sapnap going to send it to him?

Karl was about to ask George if Sapnap emailed him at all, but the aroma coming from the food in the kitchen made the issue seem less urgent at the moment.

He would just remember to ask Sapnap about it tomorrow. Knowing him, he had probably forgotten.

Karl chuckled to himself as a fond smile made its way onto his face.

That's probably it.

## Chapter End Notes

I am enjoying writing this a bit too much, especially the emails between George and the mysterious stranger ;)

I have decided I will keep my upload schedule rather loose, so I will for sure update once a week but depending on my productivity there may be more updates in between that time period. So some days I might be updating back to back, but another it will be a week until the next update. I will try to keep it to 7 days latest for uploads!

Thanks for reading! Remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated <3

- Kirbs -

## Chapter 4

### Chapter Summary

Clay has a bad night, and an even worse day to follow it.

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Clay lurched up to a sitting position, feeling the uncomfortable sweat making his bangs stick to his forehead and his black tank top stick to his body. He kicked the blankets off of him, curling in on himself as he attempted to get his breathing back under control.

Inhale.

Exhale.

Repeat.

After a few minutes, he felt himself finally beginning to calm down. He dared not close his eyes for too long to avoid falling back into the nightmare that had been terrorizing him for months.

He needed to distract himself.

He looked around his bedroom that he maintained as tidy as possible majority of the time. It was dark out, the stars were out but not entirely visible, and the moon's light coming in through his large window created weird shadows around the room.

He heard someone stir in another room, followed by the creak of a bed and a soft pattering of footsteps getting closer to his room, one step noticeably louder than the other. A rather tall girl for her age appeared at his doorway, seeing Clay sitting up in bed, clearly awake.

She had shoulder length dirty blonde hair and bangs, as well as Clay's same green eyes and freckled face. She tugged on the baggy shirt she was sleeping in as she neared Clay's bed.

"Clay," she whispered softly. Clay looked at her with a soft gaze before patting the empty spot beside him. The girl didn't hesitate to climb in bed with him, struggling a bit at first before sitting shoulder to shoulder beside him.

"Why're you up, Drista?" Clay whispered after a moment of silence, looking down at his little sister, knowing the answer already. She scrunched up her nose and flicked his cheek.

"When are you going to stop calling me that," she hissed back, making Clay crack a smile.

"Never."

"You already know why I'm up."

"You need to sleep."

"But you had the nightmare again. I can't leave."

Clay looked down at his sister who was staring up at him with calculating eyes. Eyes that were so much like his own it freaked him out sometimes.

He ruffled Drista's hair, who let out a huff in protest but didn't move his hand away.

"Get some sleep. I'm fine now," he insisted, before lightly shoving her towards the corner of the bed. She finally gave up protesting and climbed off, heading back to walk out of Clay's bedroom. She peered back at him, the shadows and lighting of the room making her face look a little funny.

"It wasn't your fault, you know," Drista whispered. Clay felt his heart sink and his throat close up.

"Good night, Drista," he barely managed to choke out, his voice wavering. Thankfully, Drista didn't call attention to it.

"...night, Clay."

Clay watched Drista walk back towards her room, his eyes falling to the prosthetic replacing the place where her left leg used to be.

Clay didn't get much sleep that night.

·☺◁▷◁◁◁☺·

"Hey Tubbo, why can't dinosaurs clap with their hands?"

"Ooh, I know this one!" Tubbo said gleefully, skipping circles around Tommy. "Because their hands are too-"

"No."

"Wait, I haven't finished answeri-"

"Cause they're all dead, Tubbo."

Tubbo came to a dead stop beside Tommy, his face dropping and his posture sagging. "Oh."

George watched as Wilbur lightly smacked Tommy upside the head as the group continued walking towards the bleachers next to the football field where they would spend their lunch period again.

"That was actually really sad," Niki remarked quietly, referring to the joke Tommy had made.

"It truly, truly is," Tubbo agreed solemnly.

As they neared the bleachers, George noticed there were people on the field this time. They were wearing jerseys over what appeared to be some sort of shoulder pads, and helmets over their heads.

"Who the fuck sat on that ball," Tommy blurted out, making everyone direct their gaze to the ball soaring through the air. Wilbur burst out laughing, clutching his stomach as he bent over slightly from the force of the laughter rolling out of him.

"It looks like some sort of large, brown egg. Do you think it could fit in my mouth," Tubbo added.

Wilbur's laughter only got worse and Niki started giggling as well.

"Let's go sit down," George reminded them despite the amused grin on his face. They all sat on the bleachers, watching the players run around the field.

"Why do they have practice during lunch," Tommy questioned, earning a shrug from Tubbo.

"They kick the ball once and then never kick it again, I think. I don't understand why now they're just throwing it and running around with it, it's like the opposite of actual football," Tubbo waved his arms around at the field, as if asking the universe what the hell was this.

"Americans, man. They don't make sense. They got everything backwards and shit," Tommy concluded before pulling out a ziplock bag from his backpack. "Time to eat a healthy meal."

"Are those gummy bears wrapped in a fruit roll up," Wilbur cringed, watching as Tommy took a bite out of the sugary monstrosity.

"Indeed."

"I pity your dentist," George commented, eyeing the candy burrito warily.

"I don't have one."

Tubbo let out a loud laugh at that, falling backwards in the bleachers and getting stuck in the dip where the legs of the person above you are supposed to be placed. Tommy began cackling himself at the sight.

George continued watching the players run about the field, not exactly understanding how the sport worked but unable to look away nonetheless. They all ate their lunch while watching the football team practice, engaging in random conversation or criticizing the American sport.

He watched as one player ran into the one holding the ball by digging his knee and leg into the other player's left leg, making them both fall forward and for the person holding the ball to accidentally release it.

Someone yelled fumble as a third player dived for the ball and secured it. The two that were on the floor got up before the one that had been tackled shoved the guy that had tackled him.

"What the fuck was that, Vincent," the guy yelled, loud enough that even George was able to hear all the way over at the bleachers. The other guy seemed at a loss, lifting his hands in surrender and probably trying to talk him down. He seemed to have a heavy, French accent from the little he managed to hear.

"What's going on here," an older man, most probably the coach, approached the two.

"That was an illegal tackle, that's what's going on. Vincent here used his legs like a fucking moron!"

"Clay, you need to calm down, son," the coach ordered. George perked up at the name, as did Wilbur, who was now watching intently as well.

"I'm absolutely fucking peachy!" Clay yelled, yanking the helmet off of his head before throwing it to the ground, making it bounce beside his leg before he began storming away.

"Clay!" the coach and several people called after him. George bit his lip in worry as he watched



two players go after him. He turned towards Wilbur, who was watching Clay's retreating figure as well.

"What was that about?" George asked.

"I don't know. He was up pretty late last night, I heard him talking with one of his sisters," Wilbur shrugged, crossing his arms. "I'm a really light sleeper and the walls between his room and the one I'm staying in are practically paper thin. He was having trouble sleeping."

Wilbur looked like he was going to say more before he stopped himself, looking back towards the way Clay had gone. It was clear he heard something more, but wouldn't say. George decided not to pry and instead worried his lip between his teeth.

"That was the person hosting you, correct?" Tubbo asked. Wilbur nodded before moving to stand.

"I'm going to go check up on him. Sometimes it's easier to talk to someone you don't know as much in comparison to someone you've know for years, so maybe I can help somehow..." he trailed off, not sounding certain in his own words but descended down the bleachers after Clay all the same. "Don't wait for me, I'll see you guys later."

"Poor Clay, I hope he's okay," Niki said, watching Wilbur begin to trot in that direction. George looked down at his hands, feeling useless.

He wished there was something he could do.

A silence fell amongst the four remaining.

"I made tea," Tubbo said suddenly. Everyone turned towards him, confused.

"Where did you get tea from?" Tommy asked.

"Oh no, I don't actually have tea, this is just a conversation starter."

"Then why did you say you made tea?" George asked now, still not understanding where this was going.

"It's a conversation starter."

"Well it's a horrible conversation starter," Tommy stated matter of factly, resting his chin on his palm. Tubbo crossed his arms, raising a defiant eyebrow at him.

"Oh, is it?"

"It is."

"But we're conversing."

"Tubbo I swear to prime."

"I think we should start heading back," Niki interjected. George agreed and the four of them got up and left the football field, walking back towards the campus.

Clay yelling and storming off would play on loop in George's head for the rest of the day.



Clay pocketed his phone, ignoring the texts and missed calls from Sapnap, Vincent, and others boys on the football team.

He had felt drained all day, and he wasn't even able to properly enjoy the sport he always loved playing. He had messed up in yelling at Vincent and getting heated over a small mistake, he knew that, but it had been building up the whole day and that moment was when he finally exploded.

He had stormed off of the field and towards his car, not caring he still had classes after his lunch period finished. He heard running behind him but he didn't look back, not even when Sapnap and someone else caught up to him and grabbed onto his shoulder, making him stop.

"Let go," Clay said with venom in his voice. He realized the person holding his shoulder was Dave, otherwise known by everyone as Technoblade. Techno's hair was plastering a bit to his forehead thanks to the sweat now that it had grown out more, and in the sunlight the blond of it almost looked like it had a tint of pink. He let go of his shoulder finally, but leveled Clay's glare with one of his own.

"Clay, you have to calm yourself," he stated firmly. Sapnap walked up beside him, looking at Clay with a more open and worried expression.

"Whatever," Clay replied lowly as he shoved past the two and continuing his march toward his car. Techno moved back in front of Clay, blocking his path with a cross of his arms.

"Anger doesn't solve anything, Clay. It builds nothing, but it can destroy everything."

"I don't need your smartass quotes right now, Techno," Clay glared at him, daring Techno to block his path again. Techno stared back at him for a few seconds before sighing and stepping aside. Clay turned towards Sapnap next, leveling a glare at him as well.

"Clay, you know it was an accident. Vincent hadn't meant to, so you can't get mad at him for-"

Clay snapped.

"Shut the hell up, Nick! You have no right to tell me to act like the bigger person, not when we all know what you're really like!" Clay practically yelled at his face. Hurt flashed on Sapnap's face as he took a step back in surprise.

"Clay, that was years ago-"

"Yeah? Well, I doubt people can really change that much. So quit acting like such a good guy now and own up to your shit instead of acting like a hypocrite."

"Wha- Clay-" he heard Sapnap start as Clay stormed away, Techno cutting in saying, "Leave him, he needs to cool off right now" before they were both completely out of earshot.

He had reached his car and sat at the wheel, fully intending on starting the car and just go home when he heard a light tap on the window. He turned expecting to see Techno, Sapnap, or another player on the team, but was surprised to instead see Wilbur peering in.

Instead of getting annoyed like he thought he would, he unlocked the passenger door and watched out of the corner of his eye as Wilbur sat down beside him. The two remained in a tense silence,

staring out the front window of the car, before Wilbur spoke up.

"We can go back to your house right now, if you want. It's up to you."

Clay felt himself deflate, as if a burden had been lifted off his shoulders. Wilbur wasn't going to ask about his outburst, which was obvious he had seen, and instead had given him the opportunity to go home.

For some reason, this reaction was what made him decide to stay.

"Let's get to class," Clay had said finally. He could see Wilbur smile out of the corner of his eye.

"You're the boss."

After that, the rest of the day went by in a blur. He paid less attention in class than usual, and avoided every one of his teammates as much as possible.

It was hard, but he managed to make it through the day without a confrontation.

That didn't stop them from blowing up his phone, though.

It was now after school hours and he was walking down the mostly empty halls to his homeroom class because he had been so out of it he left the textbook he needed in his desk. Wilbur had been nice enough to wait for him in his car.

Wilbur was a good guy.

He reached the classroom to find it was open and someone was inside. The person looked up at the sound of his footsteps, and Clay realized it was George.

"Georgenotfound," Clay said, trying to put on a smile and hoping it didn't look too forced. George eyed him, picking up the books he had probably been looking for.

"Hey."

The two stared at each other, the silence weighing heavy between them. Clay cleared his throat a bit and tried to let out a small laugh.

"I left my textbook in the classroom. I have been really out of it today," he explained in what he hoped came out as a lighthearted tone, making his way towards his desk.

"Karl left his textbooks, too, so I came by to pick them up for him."

"What are you, Karl's errand boy?" Clay joked. George shrugged.

"I offered. I needed to clear my head anyway."

"Oh."

A silence stretched between them, making George shift uncomfortably.

"Clay, are you..." George started, trailing off and biting his lip a bit. Clay cocked his head in question, urging George to continue. "Are you...okay?" Clay blinked at him before putting on a fake smile.

"What do you mean, of course I'm okay," Clay laughed awkwardly, grabbing the textbook he

needed. George's eyebrows furrowed, seeming unconvinced.

"I was at the bleachers, next to the football field. During lunch," George added. This made Clay freeze, feeling his heart stop. "I saw when you...you know."

Clay's stomach twisted uncomfortably.

"Oh."

"Yeah."

Clay felt his heartbeat drumming in his ears and his breathing begin to quicken, and he was about to blurt out that he had to go, Wilbur was waiting for him, when George dropped the books back onto the table, took the steps needed to close the distance between them, and reached up to wrap his arms around the back of Clay's neck.

It took a second for Clay's mind to catch up with his body, and he realized George was hugging him.

"George-" Clay blurted out, surprised at the sudden contact.

"Shut up, Clay."

Clay stood in shock for a few more seconds before hesitantly lifting his arms and wrapping them around George's middle. He squeezed George tighter, bending down a bit to burrow his head into the other boy's shoulder.

He hadn't even noticed he had started shaking, or when hot tears had started running down his face. He sobbed into George's shoulder, the other rubbing comforting circles into his back.

The thoughts he had been trying to keep at bay all day long began flooding in.

He thought of his outburst during lunch. How he hadn't been able to sleep because of the nightmare he could not stop having.

He thought of his sister.

And how despite what she insisted, he knew it had been his fault.

But instead of these thoughts weighing down on him like usual, he felt a small sense of relief now that he had finally allowed himself to think about them at all.

And that was enough for now.

He didn't know how much time went by, but he eventually calmed down and loosened his hold on George, who released him from the hug. The two broke apart, Clay looking down to meet hazel brown eyes gazing up into his own.

Clay snorted, then fell into a fit of giggles, growing into full blown laughter upon seeing George's confused expression.

"George, were you standing on your tippy toes?" he wheezed out between rounds of laughter, and began wheezing harder as George's face flushed in embarrassment.

"Shut. Up," George huffed, punching his shoulder lightly as Clay continued to wheeze like a tea kettle.

"You're so cu-" he cut himself off with more laughter, a pouting George not making it easier for him to stop.

"You're so annoying. And your face is all wet and gross," George said as he reached up and used the sleeve of his blue sweater to wipe away the tears still on his cheeks. Clay froze, finally sobering up from the laugh attack, and George's eyes widened as he realized his own actions. He pulled his hand away as if burned.

"Er, sorry. That was weird wasn't it."

Clay grinned down at him, using his own hands to wipe the rest of the wetness off his cheeks. "It's okay, this whole situation is a little weird. But it's not a bad weird."

"I guess," George agreed, taking a step away from Clay.

"So, what was that about, georgenotfound?"

"What was what about."

"The hug?"

"Oh." George reached up to scratch the back of his neck, his other shoulder shrugging a bit. "You just looked like you needed one."

"Do you hug everyone that looks like they need one?" Clay teased. George pouted a bit, looking away.

"Not exactly. I don't know."

Clay looked at George in silence for a few seconds, before a small smile made it's way onto his lips. "I think I did need one. Thanks, George."

George considered him for a few seconds and, after realizing that his response was genuine, responded with, "Sure. It's no big deal." Clay smiled.

"But next time, don't make a move so fast. At least take me out to dinner first, like come on," Clay smirked, before dissolving into another fit of laughter when George groaned and began walking away from him, collecting Karl's books and walking to the classroom door.

"Goodbye, Clay," George glanced back from the doorway, throwing the smallest of smiles his way. Clay's own smile broadened as he mimicked George's wave from the day before, except more exaggerated, making George stick his tongue out at him again before turning back around to walk away.

"Goodbye, georgenotfound!" he yelled after him between laughter, wheezing harder when he heard a distant "It's George!"

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Hey georgenotfound,

How was your day?

Feeling sleepy,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

it could've been better, but the day really looked up at the end

go to sleep!

Reply Forward

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

I'm happy to hear that at least the end of your day went well. I had a very pleasant end of day myself.

Going mimis now,  
Dream

Reply Forward

## Chapter End Notes

Ya'll should check out my Wattpad version of this story. I have music that goes with the story and it's formatted so much prettier.

This chapter became longer than originally intended. Oops.

As always, feel free to give me ideas in the comments or leave theories as to what you think will happen next!

Remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated <3

Love you guys!

- Kirbs -

## Chapter 5

### Chapter Summary

Clay apologizes for being an asshole.

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Heya Gogy!"

"Gogy-?"

Sapnap slammed his hands onto George's table, grinning widely at him. He ignored that this action practically made George jump sky high.

"Wanna be partners, Gogy?"

George eyed him warily, a confused smile stretching his lips.

"But why are you calling me 'Gogy?'" George asked, to which Sapnap smiled widely.

"It's like Georgie but shortened! Gogy!"

"You took a lot of letters out of there."

"I sure did," Sapnap winked, pulling up a chair to his table. George raised an eyebrow, his lips tugging upwards.

"Oookayyyy," he drawled as the teacher began pairing up students that couldn't find a partner for the project.

At least this way he didn't have to worry about being paired up with a stranger, he supposed.

"What did I miss?" Karl appeared back at their side since he had left for several minutes to use the restroom.

"Karl, do you have a partner yet?" the teacher asked, to which Karl nodded.

"I sure do! I'm going to be partners with Georgie!"

"Hey, no, I'm already partners with Gogy."

"Wha-" Karl whipped around to face Sapnap, looking both surprised and offended. "No, I am!"

"I already asked him and he agreed. You snooze you loose, Karl."

"That's not fair, I was in the restroom! And we are living under the same roof!" Karl pointed between himself and George, as if to emphasize his point. Sapnap opened his mouth to say something else when the teacher interrupted him.

"There is an odd number of students in this class, so I will allow the three of you to work together."

"Really?!" Karl and Sapnap yelled at the same time. When the teacher nodded, they looked at each other and smiled wide, then directed that same smile at George, looking about ready to burst with excitement.

"We're going to be the three musketeers!" Sapnap cheered, pumping a fist in the air.

"Yeah! The holy trinity!" Karl added, mimicking Sapnap's action.

"The triple threat!"

"Los tres amigos!"

"Three peas in a pod!"

"Alvin and the chipmunks!"

"A threesome!"

"Woah, now," George cut in, his hands flying up in surrender, causing Sapnap and Karl to burst into a fit of giggles.

"What topic do you want to research for the speech project? Something we can come up with in a week," Karl asked. Sapnap hummed, and the two continued discussing the project as George tuned them out, glancing over at Tommy and Tubbo on the other side of the classroom. They were clearly going to pair up with each other, but were already bickering over their research topic.

"All I'm saying is how funny would it be to make a speech about e-girls."

"But I don't want to have to do research on e-girls, that's boring."

"Then what do you suggest we do, Tubbo."

"Well, Tommy, how about instead of e-girls or even e-boys we decide to talk about the e-conomy."

"No, Tubbo-"

"Capitalism is a fundamentally flawed system-"

George shook his head and turned his attention back to the two in front of him.

"So basically we're going to talk about pussy."

George choked on his own spit before beginning to cough violently, his eyes wild and wide as they flicked between looking at Sapnap and Karl, who had begun cackling like lunatics.

"You can't say that out of context, Sap!" Karl laughed behind the hand covering his mouth.

"My bad, my bad," Sapnap laughed as Karl lightly shoved his shoulder.

"What," George choked out once he was barely able to, his shoulders still shaking as the coughing ensued.

"Breathe, Georgie, breathe."

"You okay, Gogy?"



"See Sapnap, you use the word pussy once and make George choke to death."

"Karl, language!" someone yelled.

"Sapnap said it first!"

"Sapnap, language!"

George covered his face with his hands, the coughs finally dying down but his face now flushing in embarrassment.

"Jesus Christ," he muttered, rubbing at his eyes that had started to water from the coughing. He finally looked towards the voice, as said person had waltzed up next to them and was giving Sapnap and Karl a disappointed look.

He wore glasses and a black hoodie with the hood pulled over his head, covering his light brown hair and casting a shadow over his face, making him look a little intimidating. The boy turned towards George causing him to flinch, but was surprised when the boy's glare immediately softened and a smile replaced his frown.

"Oh, hey! You're George, right?"

"Y-Yeah," George responded, put off by the sudden shift. He couldn't tell if the boy was intimidating or almost inviting to him now.

"I'm Darryl, it's nice to finally meet you properly. Tommy and Tubbo told me a lot about you. I'm the person hosting them, by the way," Darryl gave him a friendly smile, making George question how he could have ever thought this guy was intimidating.

"He actually goes by 'Badboyhalo,'" someone snickered, coming up beside Darryl. The boy had on a blue hoodie (what was with Americans and hoodies) with a derp face in the center of it, his dark brown hair spiked up messily. Darryl made an offended noise, pouting.

"That's just my gamer tag. I don't go around telling people to call me Badboyhalo," he huffed, the other boy smiling slyly at him.

"Whatever you say, Bad," he snickered before turning towards George. "Just call him Bad, most people do. I'm Zak by the way."

"He's actually Skeppy," Bad interjected, yelping when Skeppy poked his side. "You told him my nickname, it's only fair!"

The two boys started bickering as George turned back to face Sapnap, who was smiling at him apologetically.

"Sorry about startling you earlier Gogy, we were just saying that we should make our speech topic about felines."

"Yeah, because cats are cool and superior in every way!" Karl agreed.

"So true."

"So earlier you guys were talking about...cats?" George stated more than asked, leveling them with a tired look, making both boys grin cheekily at him.

"Meow," Sapnap and Karl said at the same time. "Jinx!" they both yelled, before bursting into

laughter at how in sync they had sounded. George rolled his eyes at them but felt himself smiling nonetheless.

Something told George moments would never be dull with those two.



The second the bell rang, Clay booked it directly towards the library. The hallways of the school were filled with students meeting up with friends for lunch, and several times people said hi to him or tried to get his attention as he made his way through the crowds. He felt bad he barely stopped to say hi back, but his focus was trained on his destination.

He finally made it to the library, opening the double doors and walking inside. There were a few students scattered in there, but the place was empty for the most part and relatively quiet. He walked towards the back where Clay knew he would find who he was looking for.

"Hey, Techno," he said just barely above a whisper, making Techno look up from his laptop and at Clay. He removed his headphones, moving them off his head to his neck, his eyes scanning Clay's face as if checking to see if he was still angry.

"Clay. Hello," he responded simply. Clay moved to his side, pulling up a chair beside him before sighing.

"Look dude, I'm sorry about yesterday. I was really rude even though you were just trying to help." He met Techno's calculating gaze, before looking away again. He felt a light pat on his shoulder before Techno turned back to his laptop.

"Don't sweat it. Happens to the best of us," Techno responded simply, Clay knowing this was his way of saying he had forgiven him already. Clay let out a sigh of relief and smiled, patting Techno's back a bit before getting back up. He said bye to him before walking back out of the library.

He was pulling out his phone to text Sapnap and ask him where he was when said person walked through the library double doors. He stopped walking when the two made eye contact, and that's when Clay noticed he was accompanied by Karl and George.

"Oh! Hey, Clay, I haven't seen you all day," Karl greeted him with a smile, but it dropped when he saw the looks on Clay and Sapnap's face. He looked between the two questioningly, clearly oblivious to the events from the day before.

Clay met George's gaze. He was looking at him with furrowed brows, worrying his lip between his teeth.

Clay had woken up late and missed homeroom, which meant he hadn't seen George since the moment they had shared after school the day before.

"Nick, can I talk to you?" Clay turned his attention back to Sapnap, who met his gaze hesitantly. "Please?"

He shrugged, following Clay out the door and leaving both Karl and George back inside the library to give themselves more privacy.

"What's up," Sapnap asked, looking anywhere but at Clay. He resisted the urge to roll his eyes and instead placed both of his hands on either of his shoulders, forcing Sapnap to finally meet his gaze.

"I'm so so sorry about yesterday. I said some terrible things, and that wasn't fair to you. I wasn't having the best day and I took it out on you, but that's no excuse. The stuff I said...I crossed several lines," Clay winced at the reminder of the terrible things he had said to Sapnap in the midst of his tantrum. "I didn't mean that. I know you've changed, and you're not the same person you were in middle school. You're one of my bestest friends, Sapnap. And I love you."

Sapnap tilted his head a bit to the side, a small smile finally making its way onto his face, lighting it up beautifully.

"I love you too, Clay, and I forgive you," he grinned, Clay smiling back in relief. Sapnap laughed a bit, extending his arms and saying, "Come here, you. Where's my hug at."

Clay let out a laugh as he brought Sapnap in for a hug. They broke apart a few seconds later, the tension between them evaporated.

"And to be fair, I was a little shit in middle school," Sapnap admitted, shrugging as if saying "it is what it is."

"You kind of were, huh," Clay teased as the other rolled his eyes.

"Oh yeah. I bullied the hell out of you for being absolutely terrible at basketball."

"Oh come on now, I wasn't that bad," Clay complained as they began walking back towards the library.

"Dude, you're like 6 foot, how do you manage to suck that bad at a sport practically made for tall people."

Clay let out a surprised laugh and bumped his shoulder against Sapnap's, who returned the gesture. They found Karl and George, Karl excitedly pointing at something inside one of the books George was holding open. They both looked up and tensed when they saw Clay and Sapnap walking towards them but relaxed again when they noticed that both boys were smiling.

"So you guys kissed and made up?" Karl whisper-shouted while wiggling his eyebrows, making Sapnap snicker.

"You can say that," Clay said, exchanging a sly smile with Sapnap before they both chuckled.

Clay glanced at George, who had been staring at him but quickly looked down and pretended to be looking at the book in his hands, making Clay put on an amused smile at his reaction.

"Have you spoken to Vincent yet?" Sapnap asked. Clay nodded.

"I ran into him this morning when I was late for class. I apologized to him, and we're cool now. And I talked to Techno right before running into you," Clay grinned. Sapnap smiled back, patting his back in an exaggerated manner.

"Good boy, Claydoh."

"Oh my lord stop."

"Oh, Clay! We're going to my house after school to start on our speech project, cause we got

partnered up for it and my mom is going to be out of town for the next couple of days because of a business trip," Karl explained. The librarian came around the corner and told them to keep it down, to which Karl apologized profusely.

"The three of you?" Clay asked once she was gone, and Karl nodded in response, whispering, "Yeah, you should come too! I'm inviting a few other people, we can all hang!"

"Wait, since when were we inviting 'a few other people,'" George asked with wide eyes. "Aren't we just working on the project?"

"Yeah, no, George, when Karl says 'small homework hangout', he really means 'huge party at my place let's get lit,'" Sapnap explained.

"Trueeeee," Karl grinned, high-fiving Sapnap just as the librarian passed by again and told them to keep it down once more. Clay had to try extra hard not to burst out laughing at the absolutely petrified look George was sporting.

"Don't worry, George, you can work on the project another day, it won't kill you," Clay teased, to which George huffed an "I know that" in response.

"Tonight is going to be so fun!" Karl squealed happily, only for the librarian to come back and kick the four of them out of the library.

## Chapter End Notes

Aaand we're finally caught up with the Wattpad updates. Future updates to come, and again, if you want to read the updates sooner, I would recommend following this book on Wattpad where I will always update first! It's under the same name, "Love, Dream // DNF" and I use the same username, "kirbakii"

I really do be speedrunning these updates, damn.

Hope you enjoyed this chapter!

Remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated <3

- Kirbs -

## Chapter 6

## Chapter Summary

Party arc (1/3)

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Bye mom!"

"Goodbye, Miss Jacobs."

"Bye boys, please take care of the house for me while I'm gone. You know the rules Karl, no funny business. Take care of your brother, and George," Karl's mom turned towards George, smiling knowingly as she began walking out the door, a suitcase trailing behind her. "You're in charge. Don't let Karl or Sean get into any trouble."

"Moooom!" Karl whined as his mother giggled while closing the door behind her. George glanced over at Karl, who was pouting and staring at where his mom had just left.

"Since I'm in charge, does this mean I can technically forbid you from having the party tonight?" George asked half seriously, making Karl turn towards him and put on a wide grin, an almost evil glint in his eyes.

"Nope," Karl lightly patted George's cheek before cackling as he walked away to begin preparations for the party. George sighed.

Oh boy.



Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Good afternoon georgenotfound,

I heard Karl is going to be having a party at his house. He's the person hosting you, correct? That must mean you had no choice but to attend. Are you prepared for the party? Type 1 if you need me to send help asap.

Sincerely,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

1

## Reply Forward

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

An ambulance is on stand by in case you end up dying. But cheer up, you'll have fun, I'm sure! Karl's parties are always a blast in my unbiased opinion.

Cheering for you,  
Dream

## Reply Forward

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

are you going to be at the party?

## Reply Forward

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

Maybe, maybe not. Guess you'll never know~

Email you later,  
Dream

P.S. Don't try to figure out who I am and just enjoy the party! It'll be fun, promise.

## Reply Forward

◀ ◻ ▶

George was still in Karl's room even after he heard the guests begin to arrive and music start to blast downstairs.

He was not hiding.

He wasn't.

...

George was totally hiding.

He let out an embarrassingly high pitched screech when Karl's door suddenly swung open, letting the loud chatter and even louder music pour into the room. He toppled out of his bed, staring at the person that had scared the life out of him and was currently laughing at his reaction.

"Big mannnn," Tommy grinned widely after settling down from his laugh attack, inviting himself into the room. "Or should I say short man," he laughed as he gestured with his hand George's short stature. George glared at the taller boy, getting up from the floor.

"Tommy, what the hell?"

"George, what're you doing in here?" Tubbo appeared at the doorway behind him, peering in and looking around Karl's room that George was currently staying in as well. "There's a party going on!"

"You heard Big T, let's go George," Tommy hauled George to his feet against his will.

"What're you two even doing here?" George asked, looking at the two boys who grinned widely at each other and then at George.

"Badboyhalo is friends with Karl, so naturally we got an automatic invite because he thinks we are awesome," Tommy explained, smiling proudly. Tubbo nodded furiously next to him, jumping up and down a bit.

"There's so many people, George, the house is practically packed to the brim. It's like the whole school out there. Karl is really popular," Tubbo noted, making George swallow roughly. He had assumed there would be just a few more people besides those he had met, not the whole school.

"Tubbo, we're trying to lure him out, not scare him into further seclusion," Tommy scolded as Tubbo smiled sheepishly and apologized.

"This house is crazy ginormous- oh."

George glanced at the door to see a girl passing by, pausing to peer into the room when she noticed the three boys.

"Hey, do any of you know where the restroom is?" the girl asked. She had short, brown hair that faded into blonde highlights, curls cascading to just above her shoulders. She was wearing a short, white party dress, and a necklace with three white pearls.

She's cute, George thought distantly.

"Um, yeah, the restrooms are just down the hall, to your left," George answered quickly before clearing his throat when he noticed Tommy, Tubbo, and the girl were now staring at him. The girl's lips lifted a bit as she eyed the three of them, her eyes coming back to land on George.

"I don't recognize you three. Are you guys exchange students?" she asked, her gaze mostly trained on George.

"We unfortunately are. And all I've learned so far is that England is by far superior than America in

every way possible," Tommy declared as Tubbo nodded in agreement. The girl let out a chuckle, her hair bouncing a bit as she laughed.

"You're not wrong. America does suck," she agreed before turning back to George and mostly addressing him. "I'm Maia by the way."

"I'm Tommy."

"I'm Toby, but everyone calls me Tubbo."

Maia was staring at George, an amused smile on her face as she lifted an eyebrow at him. "And you are...?"

"George," he blurted out quickly, his voice cracking a bit at the end. Maia giggled, so he cleared his throat and tried again. "Um, I'm George. It's a pleasure to meet you."

"Likewise," she grinned, her eyes sparkling in amusement. George felt Tommy rest his arm over his head, leaning his weight on him.

"Ignore my buddy George, over here. He's kind of antisocial. He doesn't know how to speak to women."

"Tommy-" George yelped, his face becoming warm as he tried to swat Tommy away.

"I, on the other hand, am incredibly good at talking to women. I would date so many women if I wasn't already married to the grind."

"Tommy just stop talking," George slapped a hand over the boy's mouth as Tubbo and Maia began laughing at the two. Tommy licked his hand, making George yelp and let go, screeching, "Tommy, that is disgusting!"

Maia was clutching her stomach at this point, wiping tears from her eyes that were beginning to collect from laughing so hard. "You British boys sure are something."

"George is usually a lot more suave I swear," Tubbo added, not helping. Maia found that hilarious, though, as she threw her head back and laughed again.

"Okay I'm going to go before I pee myself," she laughed, and George felt his lips curl up at her lack of filter. "See you guys around. And welcome to the States and all of that."

Tubbo and Tommy let out a chorus of goodbyes as the girl waved, walking away. George waved a bit just before she was completely gone and down the hall. He stood there, kind of dumb founded, before Tommy started aggressively waving a hand in front of his face.

"Earth to Gogy, does he copy?" he joked, making George snap out of it and roll his eyes at the boy.

"I'm out of here," he finally decided, walking out of the room with newfound courage to encounter the party going on in full swing downstairs. Tubbo let out a whoop as they trailed behind him before Tubbo and Tommy raced down the stairs, just nearly avoiding tripping.

They weren't kidding when they said the whole school had come.

He gaped at the crowds just filling up the living room. Karl's house was huge, but it seemed so much smaller with the amount of people present. The music was still blasting all around him, the crowd moving around and bopping along to it at uncoordinated times. He was starting to regret



going down when someone practically jumped on his back, hooking an arm around his neck.

"Gogyyyyy~!" Sapnap sang in a horrible British accent. George noticed a red cup in his free hand, the liquid sloshing around.

"Is that alcohol?" he yelped as Sapnap hummed, swaying a bit and leaning his weight onto George. He was clearly wasted, his cheeks tinted a rosy pink.

"Mmmm, maybe. Dependson who's askin'. Wannsum?" his words slurred together as he laughed heartily and pushed the cup up to George's nose. The smell of alcohol was strong so he hastily pushed it away.

"I'm good," he said quickly. Sapnap shrugged and said "If you say so," his words jumbling together as he let out another laugh and waltzed away, yelling at someone about beer pong.

George stood still for a few seconds, people bumping into him as they attempted to move past him. It was obvious a lot of kids were either drunk or high, as he began attempting to make his way through the crowd. He was looking around for a familiar face in the sea of strangers when he heard someone yell:

"Clay is here!"

Cheering erupted, and George turned towards the front door where Clay had just walked in, Wilbur towering behind him. While Wilbur was looking around with wide, confused eyes at the crowd cheering for Clay, the other boy was laughing and waving like he had just won an Oscar, saying hi to people and beginning to make his way through the crowd towards George's direction.

George was about to make his escape before he could be noticed when he caught Clay's eye. Clay smiled boyishly at him, waving and now booking it directly towards George who seriously considered just turning around and running the opposite direction despite the crowd of people surrounding him.

"Georgenotfound!" Clay yelled over the noise around them as he finally neared George. George lost sight of Wilbur and began to tense up as Clay got closer. Due to the tight crowd, the two boys were practically a few inches away from being chest to chest. He was wearing the same piss colored hoodie he had been wearing the first day he crashed into him as well as the first day of school with black, ripped skinny jeans, and white, goggle looking shades perched on top of his messy, dirty blond hair. George smiled nervously at the sudden close distance, needing to look up to see the taller boy's face.

"Uh, hey."

"So? How are you enjoying the party?" Clay leaned down before he spoke, his face coming down to rest beside George's in order to talk directly into his ear. George knew it was so Clay wouldn't need to be yelling, but he still felt himself shiver at Clay's breath fanning his ear.

"It's...loud," George said bluntly, with lack of a better word to describe the happenings around him. Clay threw his head back in a laugh, allowing George to relax a bit at the few seconds of personal space that the movement gave him. It was short lived, though, as Clay neared closer again, grinning from ear to ear.

"What," George huffed, his eyebrows scrunching in confusion. Clay tilted his head a bit, and George distantly was reminded of a puppy.

"Oh come on, George, loosen up. This is a party!" Clay shouted, spreading his hands out as much

as he could. Just then, Magic in the Hamptons began blasting on the speakers, making Clay smile mischievously before grabbing onto George's wrist and pulling him towards the living room that was large enough to serve as a dance floor.

"What're you doing?!" George tried yelling over the music, but Clay only let out a wheeze as he dragged him to the very center of it. Some people moved out of the way, saying hi to Clay and giving them space, and George felt his heart rate begin to spike.

"Spot a little hottie when I flipped out the shades," Clay sung along, taking off the white goggle shades off of his head and placing them on George, laughing after doing so and continuing to sing along to the song still blasting around them. George took off the glasses in favor of putting them on the top of his head to see better, noticing that Clay's gaze and smile was still trained on him.

"Are you tired of running through my mind? Take a break and we can have a good time," Clay sung along and winked, suddenly grabbing onto George's hand and spinning him around, making George let out a surprised yelp.

"Show you moves like I'm the new James Brown."

Clay pulled at George's hand, bringing them chest to chest as he wrapped an arm around his lower waist, dipping him backwards with a savage smile on his face.

"Me and you should get a room right now."

George pushed Clay away which made him lose his grip and send George dropping to the ground, Clay absolutely losing it and letting out a wheeze that could rival a tea kettle's.

"Cause if it's gold, I'll throw it away."

"You're worth more than every single chain."

Clay helped him up, just barely avoiding losing his balance since he was still laughing like a madman, and if George was grinning wildly at this point, so what?

"It ain't gonna work if you don't want it to."

"Best drink I take is when I'm sipping you."

"You know where I go when we're dancing! Handshakes in The Hamptons and getting drunk in the mansions with you!" everyone started singing along at the top of their lungs, and even George joined in this time, making Clay smile wider.

"And you look so classy, come through with that magic," Clay and George sung together, finger gunning at each other at exactly the same time which made them both burst out laughing.

Clay moved up to George and hooked his finger under his chin, lifting his head up and smiling slyly as he sung, "You know that I'm bout to smash it, it's true~," then began wheezing as George shoved his face away, George laughing along now too and feeling more at ease than he had been at the start of the party.

"Hey George, I think you've got an admirer," Clay pointed behind George, making him whip around. The girl he had met upstairs, Maia, was dancing with several other girls and glancing over at him. When they made eye contact she grinned before turning back towards the other girls, who started giggling and looking at George too before beginning to push Maia towards him. George felt a light shove, and turned to see Clay glancing between the two and smiling encouragingly at him.

"Go get her, tiger," he heard Clay say just as he pushed him towards her. He caught himself before he could end up tripping and face planting, and Maia walked up to him with the same amused grin she always seemed to be wearing.

"Hey, George."

"Hi, Maia."

"Wanna dance?"

"I don't know how to dance," George admitted, but Maia only grinned wider. She hesitantly reached for his hand, then got bolder and laced her fingers through his. George felt his face getting warmer as Maia tilted her head, a similar blush flushing her cheeks.

"That's okay. Just feel the music, go with the flow," she said, swinging their linked hands to the beat of the music. Her hips starting moving, and she started bopping her body lazily to the beat as well. George tried his best to loosen up and copy her movements, and apparently he was doing something right because she started smiling wider and nodding in approval.

"There we go, you got this!" she said, letting go of his hand. She started putting her whole body into it, free styling some moves that fit each part of the song. "Just copy me!"

George didn't know what to do, so he did the first thing that popped into his head and whipped lazily. This set off Maia, making her laugh so hard she accidentally snorted. She covered her mouth as her eyes blew wide and her cheeks reddened, but George started laughing at that which relaxed Maia again, and the two continued dancing (George trying his best but mostly failing miserably).

George was actually kind of enjoying himself, and he would be lying if he said he felt zero attraction towards Maia. She was really cute, seemed fun to be around, and overall seemed really chill. But for some reason, he found his attention start to drift from her as he began glancing at the people around him.

He spotted Clay dancing with the group of girls that had previously been dancing with Maia. They were surrounding him, all of them trying to get his attention or trying to impress him with sensual dance moves, but either Clay was extremely dense and didn't notice or he was purposely laughing it off and continuing to enjoy himself, not giving any specific girl special attention. How Clay was able to handle all of that attention trained on solely him, George would never know.

"You're friends with Clay?" Maia asked suddenly, snapping George out of his thoughts. He felt a bit embarrassed that Maia had noticed him staring at the boy.

"Kinda. I mean, I think so? I just met him a few days ago," he explained, his voice barely carrying over the music. Maia nodded in understanding.

"Clay is a really cool guy. He's friendly with everyone, and one of the stars of the football team. That's why practically everyone loves him or wants to be him," Maia explained, looking in Clay's direction. George glanced over at him, too, watching as the girls continued to fawn over him and he remained either oblivious or unfazed. "You have no idea how many girls have been after him now that he's single."

"He wasn't single before?" George asked curiously. Maia shook her head almost solemnly.

"Yeah. You weren't here for it obviously, but he had been dating this girl since freshman year. They had been really serious, some people even thought they would be those high school sweethearts that would go on to actually get married when they're older, but they suddenly split

several months ago. There's rumors as to why but I honestly don't know what's true and what isn't at this point. So many girls are after him now that he's no longer taken, but he has yet to show interest in anyone. He's probably still not ready to be in another relationship."

George continued watching Clay interact respectfully with the girls. He probably felt George's gaze on him because he turned his way. Their eyes met, and George realized the smile Clay had on for the girls was forced because one he knew was genuine broke through now as he gave George a thumbs up while not so subtly glancing at Maia and back at him. Maia snorted at his not at all subtle gesture before turning back to George.

"He's a good guy. You found yourself a good friend," she smiled honestly. George smiled back before the music faded out and someone began talking through a mic.

"How's everyone enjoying the party???" a voice boomed, and George identified it as belonging to Karl. He was standing at the top of the stairs holding a microphone that he attached to one of the speakers, looking down at everyone with a big smile. Everyone let out whoops and applause, making Karl laugh giddily. "Alrighty everyone, well keep that energy because now we will be having a special performance by one of our very own. Everyone give a warm round of applause to mxmtoon, who will be serenading us with one of her very own songs!"

Everyone turned towards George's direction with erupted applause, and he looked around confused until he realized they were looking not at him, but at Maia who still stood by his side.

"Shit, I didn't think I would be performing so soon..." Maia muttered under her breath before giving George an apologetic smile. "Sorry George, that's my cue. Hope you enjoy the show!"

George watched her take off towards the stairs, making her way to the top and taking the mic from Karl as he stepped aside.

"Hey everyone, hope you enjoy Prom Dress!" she called out with a smile before closing her eyes and clearing her throat. George felt someone's shoulder lightly bump into his, and he turned to see Clay was back by his side with the same contagious smile he always seemed to be wearing.

Music started pouring out of the speakers, a softer melody compared to the music that had been playing before, and Maia began singing.

"I'm nearing the end of my fourth year. I feel like I've been lacking, crying too many tears. Everyone seemed to say it was so great. But did I miss out, was it a huge mistake?"

George watched in awe as she continued singing beautifully, feeling Clay's gaze still on him out of the corner of his eye.

"She's good," George commented.

"Oh, yeah. Maia has written a lot of songs, she's really well known around campus for that," Clay responded. George turned to look at him now.

"She wrote this song herself?"

"Yup."

"Do you sing?" George asked out of nowhere. Clay looked at him confused, and even George was surprised by his own question.

"No, not necessarily. Why?"

"I don't know, just from the snippets of you singing along to that song earlier I thought you could sing."

"I wasn't trying to sound good, George," Clay started wheezing now, and George felt his lips inch upwards.

"You weren't half bad, to be honest."

"Are you complimenting me, George?" Clay raised an eyebrow, his lips pulling upwards in amusement. George rolled his eyes.

"You know what, forget I said anything."

"Nooo George-" Clay cut himself off with his own wheezing laughter as he leaned down to drape his arms around George's neck, bringing him in to a kind of choke-hold hug from behind. George tried swatting the taller boy away, ignoring the warmth crawling up the surface of his cheeks.

"Clay, let go-"

"Not until you tell me more about how incredible of a singer you think I am~," Clay teased from behind him before dissolving into more laughter. George fell limp, giving up on trying to get him off.

"You're so annoying."

"You love me, George."

"Wha-" George snapped his head back and upwards to look up at the boy still hugging him from behind, whom was looking down at him with amusement sparkling in his eyes. "I met you like 3 days ago!"

"You still love me because I'm such an incredibly handsome and irresistible man that is insanely good at singing that you had no choice but to fall head over heels in love with me," Clay explained, wheezing when George attempted to swat his head but didn't reach. George huffed, crossing his arms and ignoring when Clay rested his chin over his head, his arms still draped around his neck.

George looked back upwards towards Maia only to meet her eye. She turned away quickly, though, finishing the last lines of her song.

"I guess I thought that prom was gonna be fun, but now I'm sitting on the floor and all I wanna do is run," Maia glanced back at George, who was confused by her hurt expression. "All I wanna do is run."

Cheers and clapping erupted all around him as she smiled now, but something told George it was a little force. Clay let go of George then, urging him to go to her as she began walking back down the stairs. As George approached her, she glanced his way before looking away from him again.

"That was awesome. You're a really good singer and songwriter," George complimented her. She looked at George now, hurt still flashing on her face and confusing George further. Had he said the wrong thing?

"How would you know, you weren't even paying attention," she mumbled, and George thought he misheard her over the music beginning to blast out of the speakers once more.

"What?"

"Never mind. I'll see you around, George," she smiled sadly before turning and walking away. He stayed standing there, not able to process what had just happened.

"What was that about?" Clay came up beside him, and George shrugged.

"I actually have no idea."

Clay started wheezing at his honest response, and his laugh made George feel a bit better, a smile creeping onto his own face.

"Girls, am I right," Clay grinned, elbowing him playfully. George was reminded of what Maia had told him earlier about his ex but decided it would be better not to ask, so he instead merely hummed in agreement.

"Georgie! Clay!"

Karl wrapped an arm around Clay and his other arm around George, smiling widely at the both of them.

"We're playing spin the bottle, you guys want in?"

Clay and George glanced to each other, but before George could decline, Clay said, "Sure. It'll be fun." George gaped at Clay, who grinned at George innocently as Karl let out an excited whoop.

"Cmon then, gentlemen," Karl giggled as he navigated the duo through the crowd towards a side room.

George felt his heartbeat pounding loudly in his ears.

## Chapter End Notes

Reminder that updates come out faster on Wattpad :) check it out here  
<https://www.wattpad.com/story/246559344-love-dream-dnf>

Holy heck this was a big fat chapter and I didn't even get to cover half of the events I have planned. This party arc might end up being 3 updates long haha. Hope you enjoyed this chapter, though! It's actually my favorite out of the ones I've written so far.

Also thank you so much for over 50 kudos and over 600 hits already! Like what I barely started posting yesterday ho w ;;;; I love you guys wtf

And as always, remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated <3

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Summary

Party arc (2/3)

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

George watched nervously as Karl began passing red cups around the group sitting down in the center of his gaming room. He received one as well, peering down at the liquid inside of it that smelled strongly of alcohol.

"Oh shit hell yeah, now this is the good stuff."

George turned towards the boy sitting beside him who was looking at his cup like someone gave him a slice of bread when he had been starving for a week. He had on a navy blue button up shirt with a matching navy blue beanie that had 'LAFD' stitched into one side, straight black hair coming out of it and slightly covering one of his eyes.

"Cheap shit, bring out the good stuff, Karl," another boy countered, who was sitting at the other side of the boy wearing the beanie. He had side burns connecting to his beard that went down his face but stopped right before his chin and a full grown mustache atop his mouth. He was wearing a black misfits hoodie and a black New York Yankees hat on his head.

"Do you know these people," Wilbur leaned in besides George, whispering in his ear so the others wouldn't hear. George looked around the room, only able to identify three people.

"I only know three people, besides you and Niki," George responded, glancing at Niki who was sitting besides Wilbur, looking around nervously. She glanced his way and gave him a stiff wave, one George returned just as stiffly.

It was obvious they were both nervous. Even Wilbur was acting kind of stiff as he looked around the room.

"Same here. I know Clay, obviously, that Sappap guy and Karl because of you. Oh, and Minx," he added as if an after thought. George turned to him questioningly.

"Who's Minx?"

"I am, asshole."

George turned to a girl sitting across the room from him, in between Clay and another girl he didn't know. Her hair was dyed what looked like blue to George but was actually purple, and she had on dark makeup and eyeliner that made her eyes look huge. She was wearing a black, laced crop top with black short-shorts, and she stared at George with raised eyebrows. She stood out so much now that George had noticed her that he didn't know how he had missed her before.

"What," she drawled with a strong, Irish accent.

"Nothing," George said quickly, but Minx continued glaring at him.

"You're going to scare away the Brits, Becca," the boy with the mutton chops spoke up. Minx shifted her glare to him.

"Shut the fuck up, Schlatt, if they're pussies then that's their own damn faults," Minx (or Becca?) huffed as she leant on the sofa behind her. Clay started wheezing next to her, and several others in the room started laughing as well.

"I'm actually German, not British," Niki spoke up quietly, but it was loud enough that people directed their attention to her. George half expected Minx to go off on her as well, but to his surprise her expression softened as she turned to smile at the girl.

"Oh honey, I know you're German. That's why I was only insulting the British people, because I could never insult you," Minx smiled softly. George gaped as Niki smiled back and giggled.

"Aw, thank you Minx, you're so sweet," she responded with a smile. Minx formed a heart with her hands, one Niki returned from across the room, and George was still reeling from the sudden 180.

"Minx is hosting Niki," Wilbur leaned in to respond George's question from earlier.

Well that explained a lot.

"So you're a British boy, eh?" beanie boy asked besides George, leaning a bit closer to him.

"Yes..?"

"I'm Alexis. You can call me Alex," the boy grinned, his voice practically booming. George smiled slightly.

"I'm George."

"Yo, I'm Schlatt. And he actually goes by Quackity, am I right, Alex?" the guy with the mutton chops, Schlatt, grinned with amusement.

"Shut the fuck up, Schlatt!" Alex, or 'Quackity,' yelled dramatically, George oblivious to whatever the inside joke was.

"Who are you two," Schlatt ignored him, turning towards Niki and Wilbur. They exchanged introductions just as Karl finished giving out the drinks and sat down on the other side of Schlatt. Sappnap, who was sitting besides Karl, put down his drink and dropped his head onto Karl's lap, who let him, and began mumbling strings of words in the midst of his already groggy state. Minx was sitting besides them, and Clay besides her still, across the room from George. There were two other girls he didn't know sitting on the other side of Clay, and a boy in the middle of those two and Niki, making up the whole circle of people that were going to play.

"Okay everyone, so the rules are simple. The bottle spins," Karl began, lifting up an empty bottle of wine and placing it in the middle of the circle. "In the center. Whoever it lands on, they get asked a truth or dare question from the person that spun the bottle."

"Oh, so we're playing the lame version of this game," Schlatt said, making several people snicker.

"It's not lame!" Karl defended. "It gets interesting. Plus, if the person doesn't do their truth or dare, they have to drink."



"Hell yeah dude, I'll drink to that!" Sapnap cheered from Karl's lap as he reached for the cup he had put down, but Karl grabbed his cup before he could and held it away from him.

"No more drinks for you, Sap. You can sit out of this game," Karl instructed as Sapnap whined but ended up closing his eyes and making himself comfortable on Karl's lap, curling into him like an overgrown kitten.

"He's like an overgrown kitten," Minx commented George's exact thoughts, making him gape at her. She caught his eye and raised an eyebrow at him, making George look away.

"I'll go first," Alex said, reaching forward and spinning the bottle. It slowed before coming to a stop to point at the boy sitting besides Niki. He was wearing a white shirt and black jacket over it that had a colorful design at the center, as well as black pants. His hair was a reddish brown with a few white highlights in it, and some stubble was visible on his chin. He was staring down at the bottle pointing directly at him with wide eyes before looking up at Alex nervously.

"Fundy! My man! Truth or dare!" Alex said loudly. Fundy mumbled something about his name being Floris and not Fundy, but finally said "Truth."

"Tell us the truth, Fundy. Who do you fancy?" he grinned mischievously. Fundy's eyes widened comically and his eyes shot to his right before quickly snapping back to Alex as he laughed uncomfortably.

"I don't like anyone."

"Oh, that is a fucking lie," Alex shouted with a grin, calling on his bs and leaning forward. "If you don't tell us who, you'll have to drink."

Fundy seemed to weigh his options before grabbing his cup and taking a drink out of it, swallowing roughly. Alex and Schlatt burst out laughing, but George continued staring at Fundy curiously as he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

George could've sworn the person Fundy had glanced at for a split second had been Clay.

"Alright, my turn," Schlatt said roughly as he spun the bottle. It came to a stop in front of Minx, who glared down at the bottle as if it had personally offended her.

"You know the drill, Becca," Schlatt laughed, making her glare at him now as if he had done it on purpose.

"Dare, asshole."

"I dare you to kiss the most handsome male in the room," Schlatt grinned as the whole room let out an echo of 'oohs.' Minx leveled one last glare at him before standing up from her spot on the floor, and before George could realize what was happening, she walked up to him and leant down a bit, moving Clay's white goggles George had forgotten he still had on off his head and onto his nose. She kissed the top of his head as the rest of the room let out sounds of surprise. She walked back to sit down, crossing her arms as George gaped at her.

"You kissed his hair, Minx," Karl spoke up, pointing at George who was still dumb founded. Minx rolled her eyes.

"I wasn't going to kiss him on the lips, you pervert. Besides, Schlatt didn't specify anyway."

"I'm not the handsomest male?" Schlatt joked, feigning hurt. Minx flipped him off, but a smile was

playing at her lips as she glanced at George, who moved the white goggles back up to rest at the top of his head, his cheeks flushed.

"Me next!" Karl spun the bottle, coming to land pointed at Alex.

"Alright, lay it on me, Karl. Dare," Alex said excitedly. Karl put a hand on his chin, thinking for several seconds.

"I dare you to walk out the room and shout 'I ain't ever seen two pretty best friends, always one of em gotta be ugly' at the top of your lungs."

Alex did, yelling and startling several people that were walking by which made everyone in the room burst out laughing. He sat back down, and it was Minx's turn to spin.

It landed on Wilbur.

"Truth or dare, Wilbur."

"Truth."

"I dare you to tell us the truth about how you feel about Niki," Minx grinned wickedly. George turned to see Wilbur's face flushing slightly, Niki's in a similar state.

"Minx-" Niki started nervously, but was cut off when Wilbur spoke up.

"I think Niki is a really amazing girl, and people walk all over her all the time just because she's extremely nice to everyone. People say she's wholesome and cute, and while this is true, I also believe she's really strong and intelligent and is capable of doing stuff on her own. Whoever is lucky enough to be her partner really hit the jackpot with this one," he finished, looking at Niki who smiled super big at Wilbur in return. Everyone in the room let out a chorus of "awww's."

"That was cute, but I meant romantically," Minx said bluntly, making Wilbur and Niki flush once more. Thankfully, Karl saved them from further embarrassment by saying they needed to move on because Wilbur had technically already answered the question.

Clay was up to spin, and George met his eye. Clay flashed him a smirk as he spun the bottle, eventually slowing down and coming to a stop to point at the girl sitting besides Fundy. Her hair was an electric blue, which made her stand out just as much as Minx, and she was wearing a blue crop top and black short-shorts. She smiled at Clay, leaning her hand on her chin as she raised an eyebrow at him.

"Well hello there, Clay," she smiled sweetly at him.

"Hello Celestia. Truth or dare?"

"Dare."

Clay thought for a few seconds before shaking his head. "I got nothing."

"Celestia, I dare you to find your crush and kiss them!" Alex yelled suddenly, as others let out a chorus of complaints such as "They already dared someone to do something similar." Despite that, she nodded. George was expecting her to walk out of the room in search of her crush, but instead she crawled the short stretch she needed to sit directly in front of Clay.

"Hi, Clay."

"Celestia-" Clay started, but before he could get another word in, she had leant in and pressed her lips onto his.

George watched as Clay's eyes flew wide open, and nearly everyone in the room gasped. Clay broke the kiss by shuffling backwards, his eyes still as big as saucers.

"I- Celestia-"

"It was the dare. Sorry, Clay," she responded before moving back to her spot. Clay stared at her with wide eyes, still in shock, before glancing around the room and coming to a stop to look at George.

George raised his eyebrows at him, and Clay seemed at an obvious loss of words as he pressed his lips into a thin line.

"My turn!" the girl sitting in between Clay and Celestia spoke up quickly, possibly in an attempt to lift the sudden tension in the room. She had blonde hair and blue eyes and was wearing a long sleeved black top with a black skirt, some of her hair picked up in a makeshift ponytail while the rest was loose. The bottle spun and came to a stop to point directly at-

"Georgie!" Karl smiled at him. George stared down at the bottle before looking up at the girl.

"George, right? We haven't met, I'm Alyssa," the girl spoke up. George nodded slightly as she asked him "Truth or dare."

"Um, dare?"

"I dare you to down your whole cup AND Sapnap's on top of that," she grinned widely as everyone erupted in shouts, effectively lifting the tension entirely.

"What?! Is that allowed?? I have to drink either way," George complained, looking around. Everyone starting egging him on, shouting "Chug, chug, chug, chug," as Karl passed Sapnap's still full cup to Schlatt, and Schlatt to Alex, and finally Alex to George. George looked down at the cups on either of his hands which were each filled to the brim, the strong smell of the alcohol filling his nostrils and making him light headed.

He looked over at Clay. He wasn't looking back at him, rather playing with a loose string on the carpet flooring, deep in thought. George made a mental note to talk to Clay later as he tipped his cup up to his lips and drank the whole thing. Everyone started cheering, shouting his name excitedly as George continued with his own cup next, starting to cough as the liquid burned down his throat.

"Ayeee, that's my boyyyyy," Alex cheered as he patted George's back roughly. George let out a strained chuckle amidst his coughing just as Clay suddenly stood up and walked out of the room. Celestia was chewing on her nail, her expression sad as she watched him walk out.

"I'll be right back," George blurted out, already feeling the effects of the alcohol in his bloodstream as he stood up and nearly lost his balance, rushing after Clay without a second thought.

George would be unable to recall the rest of the night.

:)

Remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated <3

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 8

## Chapter Summary

Party arc (3/3)

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Clay was pushing past people, muttering apologies every time he accidentally shoved someone especially hard, but didn't once stop moving. He wove his way through the crowd, the pulsing music and loud chatter almost whispers in comparison to the pounding in his own head, muting out every other sound.

He rushed out of Karl's back door where a lot more people were lounging around in his backyard and around his large pool. He ignored everyone, even the people that called out to him, and grabbed hold of the fence door at the very end of the backyard, fiddling with the latch and opening it before dashing into the woods it led to.

He didn't even notice it was already dark out.

He didn't care that the woods would be even darker.

He ran away from the noises of the party, yet the loud ringing in his ears persisted.

He ignored the branches scratching his cheeks as he wove his way through the thick grove, not exactly knowing where he was going but not stopping either, his feet pounding against the uneven forest floor.

He just needed to get away.

He needed it to be quiet for a second.

Just for a second.

Please, just be quiet.

He tripped over the root of a tree that was sticking out of the ground and fell forward, face planting on the floor, effectively dirtying his hoodie and tearing his pants.

He winced as he looked down at his exposed knee where blood had started to trickle out before sighing. He rested his back on the trunk of a tree beside him, leaning his head back and closing his eyes tightly.

His hand absentmindedly went up to touch his bottom lip as the event replayed in his head.

"Idiot," he muttered to himself.

"Who're you calling an idiot, idiot," a voice huffed out. Clay jumped, having been so lost in his own thoughts that he hadn't realize somebody had followed him.

"George?" Clay asked in surprise, barely able to make out the boy in the dark. He was breathing heavily, which meant he had probably come running after him.

"I feel like throwing up," he admitted shakily. Clay quickly got up, hissing at the pain in his leg but ignoring it in favor of coming up to George's side.

"Here, sit down," he moved George to the tree, lowering him down as gently as possible. He then sat down next to him, wincing once again as pain jolted through his leg.

"You're bleeding, Clay."

"I'll be alright."

"No. You're going to bleed to death and die. Then I'm going to puke all over you and it'll be super gross and it'll smell really bad. When someone comes and finds us they'll think I murdered you in cold blood and take me to jail to serve a sentence of 50 years for manslaughter."

Clay started laughing as George continued.

"Then once my 50 years are up I'll be an old wrinkly man. I'll have diabetes and everybody will hate me for murdering you. I will die two days later."

Clay was wheezing at this point, tears collecting at the corner of his eyes as he clutched his stomach.

"I can't breathe-" he barely let out between laughs. George turned to him, his face deadpan.

"Why are you laughing, Clay. That's rather rude. I just died."

Clay's head fell to hide in the crook of George's neck, his shoulders still shaking with laughter. He felt George start to giggle too, before he was outright laughing along with Clay. When the two of them finally settled down, Clay realized his head was still on George's shoulder, but he didn't move.

"You're a talkative drunk, aren't you," Clay chuckled lowly. He felt George relax a bit, leaning his weight on the trunk behind them and shifting closer to Clay in the process.

"I'm not drunk."

"You downed two cups of alcohol that were filled to the brim," Clay laughed lightly. He felt George shrug.

"I guess."

"You guess."

"I guess."

The two boys fell into a silence that surprisingly wasn't uncomfortable. Clay could hear as George's breathing began to even out, along with the sounds of crickets around them and the rustling of leaves in the light wind.

"Oh right," George spoke up suddenly.

"Oh right what."

"I was going to ask you if you were okay."

Clay felt himself smiling slightly at the forgetfulness of his friend, but then it dropped when he thought over the question. He hadn't even realized George had made him forget the reason why he had blindly ran into the woods in the first place.

"I needed to get out of there."

"Vouch."

"Pfft- What??" Clay wheezed, turning his head slightly to look at George's profile.

"Oh sorry, I meant to say, that sucks. Boohoo you. So sad. Much depresso."

Clay started laughing again, finding it hilarious the way George acted as a drunk.

"You're a piece of work," Clay sighed after he had stopped laughing, making George chuckle lightly.

"YoU IOvE mE, cLaY," George made fun of what Clay had said earlier in the night using a hilariously high pitched voice that set off Clay in another round of wheezes.

"Settle down there, buckaroo, it wasn't that funny," George said in a terrible Texan accent, Clay doubling over in laughter and making his head fall from George's shoulder to rest in his lap instead. Clay wiped at his eyes and looked up to see George peering down at him.

"Thanks, George," Clay whispered, loud enough that George heard.

"I didn't do anything."

"You did a lot, actually," Clay chuckled, smiling up at the boy.

"Do you want to talk about earlier? Or should I drop it," George asked. And for some reason, this was the moment Clay looked at him, like, really looked at him.

George was attractive, he had been aware of that fact since he had first crashed into him that day at the airport, and Clay had no problem admitting that he thought so. He was already popular among the girls at school, especially since he had that cute British accent that women were generally total suckers for.

His short hair was messy, and Clay noticed with amusement that some crumpled leaves and small sticks had gotten stuck in there, probably from chasing after Clay. He still had Clay's white goggles on the top of his head somehow. He was wearing a blue shirt that had a red insignia in the center right below his collar with the numbers 404 written in white.

"I was in a serious relationship that ended a few months ago," Clay started suddenly. George's eyes widened slightly, but he didn't say anything as Clay continued.

"Her name was Sam. I used to think she was my soulmate, the love of my life, all of that cheesy stuff," Clay chuckled darkly. "I couldn't have been more wrong. The second things got hard, she said it was better to end it. All those years, gone up in smoke just because she didn't want to try a little bit harder."

"What happened?" George whispered, as if afraid to ask. Clay gaze flickered between each of the boy's brown eyes, filled with deep concern, just for Clay.

He hadn't wanted to talk about what happened to anyone. It had been months ago, but to Clay it was still an open wound.

But for some reason, here in George's lap, looking up at the boy with tall trees swishing in the wind above him and further up an endless purple sky twinkling with millions upon trillions of stars, was when Clay finally put the painful memories, the terrible nightmares that had haunted him for months, and the pain and guilt he felt every single day no matter how much he tried to hide it, into words.

"I fucked up," Clay said in a choked laugh, feeling the sting of tears threatening to pour out of his eyes. "I fucked up so bad, George. I was supposed to drive my sister to her first cross country meet, and she was so excited to have joined, you should've seen her, George. She wouldn't shut up about it," Clay laughed at the memory, before his face darkened again.

"But I didn't see the truck coming and-" Clay cut himself off in a sob, his hand flying up to his mouth in an attempt to cover it.

He pushed through.

"The truck hit the passenger's side where she was sitting. The car flipped over twelve times."

Clay knew he was crying now, his face wet as he frustratingly wiped the tears away with his hands.

"I don't know how we made it out alive. Or how I was the one that made it out in one piece out of the two of us."

"What do you mean?" George asked softly. Clay smiled at him, pain evident in every feature of his face.

"Her leg got fucked up so bad, she had to get an amputation. How ironic, right? She was about to go to her first cross country meet, and she loses her leg. And it was all my fault," Clay laughed humorlessly. He could taste the salt of his own tears in his mouth now.

"It wasn't your fault, though," George said, but Clay shook his head.

"It was. It is my fault. I should've seen the truck coming, but I got distracted because I was on speaker with my ex-girlfriend, Sam," Clay explained, the memories fresh in his mind and cutting into him like multiple blades digging into his skin.

"After what happened to Drista, my sister, I lost it. I wasn't myself for weeks, I'm still not entirely myself sometimes and I lose my cool a lot, but back then when the accident had just happened it was infinitely times worse. I was so depressed I started pushing all the people I care about away, and I refused to talk about it to anyone. I actually haven't talked to anyone about it, until..." Clay trailed off, looking up at George again. Clay hadn't even noticed George had started playing with his hair, and the sensation of hands raking through it helped him calm down the slightest bit as he leaned into the touch.

"Anyway, Sam tried to get me to open up, but I wasn't ready to talk about it. I kept pushing her away, and she took it personally and said if I wasn't comfortable talking at least to her about it, then it wouldn't work out. Saying it now, it sounds like she just wanted to feel as though she was special, like she was the only one I would willingly talk to about it, which is stupid. It doesn't work that way."

Clay cleared his throat, already feeling it becoming sore before continuing, "She ended it. I think she also had some guilt about what happened since she was in a call with me when the accident



happened, or maybe even some trauma from hearing a crash through a phone and knowing that there is nothing you can do to stop it. I don't know." Clay shrugged. "But yeah, we broke up and it only made the situation worse for me. Not only did I fuck up my sister's life, but I lose my girlfriend in the process, too."

"If your girlfriend broke up with you over something like that, then she wasn't worth it. You deserve so much better than that," George spoke up, staring at Clay with an intensity that had him pinned in his gaze. Clay felt his lips twitch upwards.

"Thanks, George," he whispered. He realized he had been thanking George a lot lately.

First when he hugged him and comforted him that day he had snapped at everyone, and now twice today.

"It still sucked, though. Like I said, I thought she was the girl I would spend the rest of my life with, but it ended just like that. That's why I don't want to commit myself to anyone again, it's not worth the hard work only for it to end so abruptly over the slightest inconvenience. That's why when Celestia kissed me-" Clay cleared his throat, shaking his head. "Celestia is great. Maybe if I was in a better mindset, I wouldn't mind exploring a relationship with her and getting to know her better in that aspect. But I can't give her any of that. Not with the way I am right now. I feel stuck. I've felt stuck for months."

Clay flinched when he felt George's thumb caress his cheek, then the other, and he realized he was wiping away the tears from his face, which made him smile the slightest bit.

"You're a touchy drunk, too, huh," Clay laughed lightly, finding it adorable when the boy pouted.

"No I'm not. You're just sad," he huffed. Clay chuckled a bit more, curling himself a bit more on George's lap.

"Yeah, I am sad."

"Why sad. Happy."

Clay laughed again, shaking his head fondly at the British boy. They fell into a comfortable silence, the sounds from the party too far away to hear, especially with the added wind.

"It's crazy how easy it is to talk to you. Like, we just met a few days ago, and yet," Clay shrugged. George hummed, his hand still playing with strands of his hair.

"Wilbur once said that sometimes it's easier to talk to someone you don't know as much in comparison to someone you've know for years," George responded, tilting his head at Clay. Clay felt himself smiling as he thought of Wilbur, who had supported Clay this whole time without demanding explanations for his actions, such as the day he lost it during practice. He hadn't even asked about the prosthetic on his sister Drista when he formally met her, instead having treated her like every other kid her age, and continued to do so.

"Wise words."

"Truly wise."

"Thanks for listening, George."

"Anytime, Claydoh."

Clay started wheezing, slapping George's arm playfully before getting up from his lap, grimacing slightly from the pain that shot through his leg.

He had even forgotten about the still open wound on his knee.

He shakily made his way to his feet, sniffing and wiping the last of the tears from his face, feeling lighter than he had in months. Saying what he had been thinking about for the last months out loud to someone had actually been a bit liberating.

George stood up as well, swaying a bit as he did so Clay came up to his side to balance him. George then moved to Clay, tiptoeing to wrap his arms around his neck, and Clay had an odd sense of déjà vu as he returned the hug tightly, slinking his arms around George's waist and burying his head into his shoulder. He breathed in deeply, letting out a shaky exhale as the tears finally stopped pouring.

"I hope one day you come to accept that it really wasn't your fault. You deserve to forgive yourself, because I'm sure everyone else has already forgiven you," George spoke up suddenly, which goddammit, George, Clay had just stopped crying but now the tears were welling up again. Clay laughed wetly, hugging the shorter boy tighter and not saying another word.

Clay and George proceeded to make their way through the woods, an arm over each other to support the other (George because he was feeling lightheaded and kept losing his balance, and Clay because of his bleeding knee). They would burst out laughing whenever they ended up tripping or losing their balance and falling, which happened several times, but they still managed to find their way back to Karl's house.

It was still going on in full swing despite the hour, which was already past 12 probably, so they wove their way through the crowds. Several people stopped to ask them if they were okay, but George and Clay always just waved them off and laughed at how they probably looked.

Clay's eyes were red and puffy from crying, and George's face was flushed from the alcohol still in his system. Not to mention they were full of dirt, sticks and dried leaves from head to toe, and Clay's pants were still ripped where the blood had dried from the wounds.

They finally made their way up the stairs to Karl's room, thankful they didn't run into any of their close friends that probably would have bombarded them with more questions. Clay locked the door behind them to avoid anyone from entering and instructed George to change into clean clothes while he locked himself in the restroom and cleaned out his wound the best he could. He found some gauze he placed over it to prevent it from getting infected, if it wasn't already.

When Clay moved back out of the restroom, he saw George curled up on his bed in clean clothes. He smiled fondly as he made his way to his side, looking down at the boy now sleeping soundly. He absentmindedly brushed a few strands of hair away from George's forehead, but before he could turn to walk away a hand grabbed hold of his wrist.

"Stay," George whispered, his eyes still closed.

"I can't, George. I have to go home."

"Please."

Clay looked down at the boy he had opened up his heart to, laid himself completely bare in front of, and who hadn't judged him at all, instead comforted him and was there by his side, listening, and a warmth he had never felt before for anyone overtook Clay as he got the strong urge to protect

him at any cost, despite the fact they had just met days ago.

"I'll stay."

"Come," George whined, pulling at his arm slightly to show he wanted Clay to lie down with him. Clay let out a fond laugh.

"I can't, George, I'm full of dirt from head to toe."

"My clothes. Bottom drawer," George let go of Clay's arm to point at a dresser on one side of the room. Clay watched him for a few seconds, realizing George was going to continue to be stubborn about this so he might as well. He moved to the drawer and opened it, grabbing the first white hoodie he saw that had a similar red insignia to George's shirt on it, and grabbed the baggiest pants he could find.

He turned back towards George, and since he saw the boy's eyes were still closed, he changed there in the middle of the room. He left his shoes and dirty clothes in a corner before grabbing the clothes he had gotten. The hoodie was thankfully big enough on George that it fit snugly on Clay, and he had trouble taking off his pants with his wound but he managed to before slipping on the baggy, black sweats he had gotten that fit tighter on Clay than they probably did on George. He looked down with amusement when he noticed they were ankle length due to their difference in height.

"Clayyyyyy," George whined from his spot on the bed. Clay chuckled as he moved back to his side, grabbing one of the blankets and placing it over George. He suddenly grabbed his arm again and yanked him down more forcefully, making Clay fall down in the bed beside him. They were now lying face to face beside each other, and George's eyes opened slowly for the first time since he had lied down.

"Sleep," George instructed. Clay was close enough that he could feel George's breath fanning his face, and a very light dusting of freckles on George's nose that he hadn't noticed before.

"Okay, George," Clay smiled softly at the other boy, who didn't close his eyes. He was scanning Clay's face before one of his hands went up to lightly brush against one cheek, then over the bridge of his nose, and then to stop at the end of his other cheek.

"Dots."

"They're freckles, George," Clay laughed softly at the 17 year old who was acting like a 7 year old, his fingers beginning to poke at each of the freckles on Clay's face.

"So many."

Clay smiled fondly as the other boy gave up on poking each of his freckles, his hand falling to rest in the small space between them. He now stared into Clay's eyes as they began to drift shut, probably from sleep taking over George.

"What color are your eyes," George mumbled the question so softly that Clay barely heard. Clay blinked at him confused, but decided it was probably the alcohol making him ask obvious questions.

"Green," Clay humored him with a response as George smiled at him drunkily. Clay realized he liked it the few times George smiled.

"I knew it. There was no way your eyes were piss colored."

Clay burst out laughing, making his face draw slightly closer to George, who looked at him confused before his eyes finally finished drifting shut.

"Sleep now."

"Good night, George."

"Night."

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Clay begins to arouse, opening his eyes slowly, squinting at the moonlight pouring into the darkness of the room. He cuddled closer into the pillow beside him, only to realize it wasn't a pillow at all.

George was still sleeping soundly, his breaths coming out slowly and evenly and fanning Clay's collarbone lightly. His arms were wrapped lazily around Clay's middle, his body curled into Clay's, who had his arms wrapped around George's shoulders almost protectively.

Clay was embarrassed when he realized he didn't even mind. It was insane how in such a short amount of time, he had already grown way too fond and way too attached to this boy. He could even say George was one of the people he now trusted most in his most vulnerable moments, something he had a hard time doing with a lot of people he's known for years even.

Clay stayed still for several more moments, allowing himself this moment of vulnerability with the shorter boy. He felt calm and safe with him in his arms, and he realized he hadn't even had a nightmare as he slept, despite him having reopened the memories that usually haunted him just the night before.

At one point he finally decided he had overstayed his welcome, so he released George from his hold and slowly pulled the arms still wrapped around him off, allowing himself the opening to slip out of bed. Thankfully George didn't stir, probably too knocked out from the alcohol and tiredness combined. Clay readjusted the blanket over George's shoulders, looking down at the boy with a soft smile.

He glanced over at the other bed in the room to find Karl was already tucked in as well. Upon moving closer, he noticed Sarnap was laying down besides him, and the two were practically spooning. Sarnap had probably been too drunk to drive home, so Karl let him stay as well.

Clay realized they had probably noticed Clay in bed with George, but at least now he could turn it around on them and tease the two for spooning themselves.

He grabbed his shoes and dirty clothes from the corner in which he had left them before silently slipping out of the room, walking down the stairs to the front door and unlocking it quietly before making his way to his car still parked at one side of the road.

He drove home.

AYO🐼WHERE🐼IS🐼WILBUR🐼AYO🐼

I enjoyed writing this chapter :) very full of fluff! But will it last? Guess we'll find out ;)

Remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated <3

Love each and every one of you and tysm for over 1700 hits and over 100 kudos holy hell you guys are insane :")

- Kirbs -

## Chapter 9

### Chapter Summary

Clay has a crisis.

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Wilbur I am so so sorry, how can I make it up to you?"

"Clay, it's fine, seriously. Techno drove me home. And you've been apologizing all morning."

Clay's grip tightened on the steering wheel as his eyebrows pinched together, his gaze focused on the road but his mind elsewhere. He couldn't shake the overwhelming feeling of guilt, and that he had fucked up and let someone who had been there for him before down, again.

"Clay, stop feeling guilty. It's not your fault you passed out at Karl's party and ended up staying there."

Clay winced at the reminder of the lie he had conjured at the spur of the moment when he arrived at an ungodly hour to his house. His mom had already fallen asleep, thankfully, but one of his sisters was up when he attempted to sneak back into his room. When Drista had asked where he had been and why he was wearing different clothes, he found himself making up a story about having passed out from being too tired, and Karl gave him a change of clothes so he could rest for a bit at his house. He doesn't think she fully believed him, but she didn't drill him any further either.

Drista then repeated the story the next day to Wilbur, and Clay felt terrible for being dishonest.

But he didn't correct her. Because for some reason, he couldn't bring himself to tell them the truth.

That he had a meltdown and ran into the woods over a kiss. That a tipsy George ran after him, and Clay ended up having a moment with the boy. How he spilled everything he had been unable to say to any soul, or even just out loud, to him. How they went back to Karl's room, and Clay tucked George into bed. How George insisted Clay change into clean clothes that was too small for him, but he wore nonetheless, and how he was pulled into bed with him.

And how safe he felt sleeping with George in his arms.

So safe, he didn't even have a nightmare that night, despite the fact that he reopened those haunting memories just before going to bed.

And how light he's felt since then.

Well, besides the guilt over the fact that he forgot he was Wilbur's ride.

Clay winced at the pain that shot through his leg when he hit the gas. He had been pretty good at hiding his scraped knees so far to avoid questioning, but he felt himself biting into his lip every once in a while when he made certain movements with his legs.

Too bad he had to throw out those pants he tore. They had been his favorite jeans.

At least he still had his green hoodie. He thought of it, still sitting in the trunk of his car since he left it there the night before.

He needed to wash it.

"Still, you have to let me make it up to you, somehow," Clay insisted again as they neared the school. He could see Wilbur shake his head but smile out of the corner of his eye.

"Okay, Clay. I'll think about it," Wilbur finally gave in, making Clay feel a little better. He parked the car, and both of them got out before heading towards campus.



Clay closed his locker shut to reveal Sapnap, leaning on it with his arms crossed and a smug look on his face.

"Well hello there, Clay. Great seeing you this fine morning."

Clay turned to him fully, one eyebrow drawing up.

"Well don't you look well rested," Sapnap smiled knowingly, Clay already aware where this was going.

"How's Karl, by the way?" Clay shot back, making Sapnap's smirk drop instantly. "Are the rumors true? Is he more cuddly than a body pillow?"

"Shut up, man," Sapnap huffed, and Clay was surprised to see a light flush reddening Sapnap's cheeks. "I was drunk, I didn't realize I was cuddling him till like, the next morning. You, on the other hand, were sober. And don't try to deny it, you didn't accept a single drink all night, and you left in the middle of spin the bottle, Karl told me."

"George had insisted I stay. He was being really stubborn, and I was tired so," Clay shrugged. "I didn't intend on falling asleep for hours, and I left really early in the morning, too."

"Where did you even run off to? Karl caught me up on everything this morning, saying you suddenly ran out and George followed," Sapnap asked, looking at him questioningly. Clay bit his tongue. On the one hand, he wanted to tell him the truth but at the same time, he wanted to keep what happened between him and George that night private.

"We just talked," Clay said instead, which technically wasn't a lie. He then realized he probably spoke to George this morning as well, and had to ask, "Did you drill George about this, too?"

"Nah man, he looked terrible this morning. You can tell he doesn't handle alcohol well, bet he's having a really bad hangover. I had to leave fast to get changed at home, anyway, so I didn't get a chance to talk to him," Sapnap explained. Clay felt a pang at hearing George wasn't having the best morning, and without realizing it his mind had already started thinking of ways he could make the hangover easier for him. He was brought back when Sapnap leaned in a bit, smiling slyly. "Ooh, Clay, getting close to the British boy now, are we?" Sapnap teased, and as Clay opened his mouth to rebuke, a voice from behind interrupted him.

"How are you this chipper, Sapnap? You were totally wasted just yesterday."

Clay felt his heart stutter.

...huh?

"What can I say, I have a high alcohol tolerance," Sapnap responded proudly as Clay turned around to see George standing right behind him.

There were bags under his eyes, his hair was still wet from a shower and disheveled, and he looked like he had picked out the first articles of clothing he found and hastily put them on. He was slouching slightly, as though he were carrying a heavy weight over his shoulders, and his movements seemed slower than usual.

Sapnap had been right, he looked awful.

And yet, Clay could hear his heart drumming loudly in his ears and his throat close up as George's tired gaze slid from Sapnap to him.

"H-Hey, George," Clay stammered out, feeling his cheeks flush in embarrassment. George merely blinked at him slowly before rubbing tiredly at one of his eyes.

"That's a first."

"What do you mean?" Clay asked quickly, his voice an octave too high, and he could practically feel Sapnap's questioning gaze digging holes into the back of his head.

He could even feel his hands getting sweaty as he hastily wiped them against the sides of his pants.

Why did he feel so nervous suddenly? It was just George.

"You didn't greet me using 'georgenotfound,'" George explained slowly, swaying a bit before leaning his weight on the locker, seeming as though he were too tired to even keep himself standing upright.

"Oh, right. I guess I just forgot, I'm kind of out of it today. Long night, and all," Clay let out a strained laugh, and now he knew for sure that Sapnap was looking at him weird. George didn't notice, thankfully, because he just hummed and rubbed his eyes again, this time with both hands.

"Uggghhh, this is why I don't like drinking. Now I can't even remember-" Clay didn't hear the end of George's sentence because a loud voice began talking over him.

"Ayeeee, Georgeeee my boyyyyy," Alex draped an arm around the shorter boy, who flinched at his volume.

"Can you please speak louder, I can't hear you," George drawled sarcastically, making Alex burst out laughing and George turn to point a glare at the boy before recognition lit up his face ever so slightly. "Oh, you were the guy sitting next to me during spin the bottle. Quackity, was it?"

"Yeaaaah, that's right- wait no!" Alex screeched, offended when he realized what George had called him. "It's Alex! Not Quackity, A L E X."

"I'm pretty sure he heard you a little too loud and clear. You don't need to spell it out for him, Quackity," Sapnap chuckled as he began walking away from the three, heading for class. Alex quickly followed suit, bickering with the boy, which left Clay and George.



Alone.

For the first time, since the night before.

Stay cool, Clay.

"Do I have something on my face or something," George drawled. Clay quickly shook his head when he realized he had been staring.

So much for staying cool.

"Um, nope. You just look...tired?" Clay blurted out, before he began flailing his hands every which way. "Not to say you look bad. You look fine, it's just obvious you had a long night. And the hungover probably isn't helping. Um, do you feel okay? Do you need water or something? Okay, if I'm being honest, you do look seconds away from passing out so-"

Clay cut his embarrassing rambling short when he realized George was giggling, his head falling slightly and his eyes scrunching shut as soft laughter poured out of him, shaking his shoulders slightly. Clay felt heat pooling in his face as the shorter boy looked up at him with a tiny, barely-there smile.

"I'll be fine, Clay. I could use some water, though."

"Right, of course," Clay responded quickly, opening his locker and grabbing the unopened bottle of water he had conveniently left in there before holding it out awkwardly for George. "Um, here. I haven't opened it yet."

"Thanks," George replied softly as he took the bottle and slowly took off the cap before bringing it up to his lips to take several sips. Clay's eyes subconsciously fell down to his throat and followed the movement of George's adam's apple as it bobbed up and down with every swallow. Upon realizing what he was doing, his eyes quickly darted away, his face burning.

What the hell?

"Are you okay, by the way? You've been acting kind of off," George asked once he had downed more than half the bottle, tucking it under one of his arms and wiping his mouth with his free hand. Clay attempted to swallow past his suddenly too-dry throat.

"I'm just a little tired. Making me act weird, I guess," Clay lied before biting his lip as George studied his face closely. He watched as the boy blinked slowly before shrugging, turning around to slowly drag himself towards homeroom, leaving Clay asking himself what the fuck was going on with him today.



Clay avoided George for the rest of the day.

It wasn't exactly hard, he only did have homeroom with the guy, but for some reason, Clay was suddenly so aware of him.

It's like he was suddenly everywhere.

His gaze kept finding him amongst the crowd in between classes as if he stuck out like a sore thumb, which really he didn't, and yet he would always have to quickly dart the opposite way to avoid the risk of bumping into him.

Thankfully he never did, because the boy was too hungover to notice Clay's sorry ass scurrying around and most of the time he was too distracted by Karl constantly making sure he was okay.

He didn't even know why he was acting this way. All of a sudden, he couldn't even look at George without feeling his heart stutter before uncomfortably lodging itself in his throat and feeling his face heat up considerably.

He needed to talk about it with someone. But he didn't want it to be someone that knew about him leaving the middle of the spin the bottle game with George. He didn't want anyone asking questions.

He found his opportunity after school when football practice had ended. Techno was the last person remaining in the locker room, putting the last of his things into his duffel bag before closing the gym locker shut.

Technoblade was wise, right? In a weird, random anecdotes and metaphors kind of way.

"Hey Techno," Clay spoke up, getting the other boy's attention. Techno nodded at him in acknowledgement as Clay moved closer to him, taking a seat in the bench closest to the boy. "I have a question."

"What is the question, Clay?" Techno asked, turning his body towards him to give Clay his full attention. Clay suddenly felt himself squirming as he racked his brain on how to phrase his question while keeping the situation as vague as possible.

"So let's say all of a sudden, one day, you start acting weird around a person. Like, they suddenly make you nervous and you find yourself avoiding them. What do you think would cause you to suddenly act like that?"

Techno turned his attention to the ceiling for a second, taking a few seconds to consider Clay's words, before turning back to raise an eyebrow at the boy. "What was my last interaction with this person like? Before I started acting like a dimwit. Metaphorically speaking, of course," he added. Clay found himself smiling in amusement at the indirect jab that was probably on purpose, knowing Technoblade.

"Um, you had just opened up to this person. A lot. Told them about stuff you hadn't told anybody else." Clay turned away from Techno's steady gaze then, coughing awkwardly a bit.

"It probably has everything to do with that. You told this person things you haven't told anyone else, so now you don't know how to act around a person with this much knowledge about your vulnerabilities. They can easily use it against you at any given moment, which is why I would never give my opponent a weapon they can use to turn against me. They say you should be careful who you share your weaknesses with, because some are just waiting for the opportunity to use this information against-" Clay felt this monologue was getting sidetracked, so he quickly cut Techno off.

"Right, but- wait, I never said it was about me," Clay refuted quickly when he realized Techno had referred to the situation as Clay's situation. Techno rolled his eyes at him before moving to sit beside him on the bench, side eyeing him.

"Please, it's so painfully obvious this is something you're going through and don't know how to react to, so don't you dare say that cheesy line that 'I'm asking for a friend' when we both know the truth," Techno air quoted before giving Clay a look like 'I dare you to deny it.' Clay sighed heavily, resting his chin on his hand and looking at the lockers in front of them.

"It's just so weird. I open up to him like I haven't to anybody else, and now I'm overthinking everything I do and say around him. Shouldn't I be feeling closer to him? And not this, weird, suddenly aware of everything he does thing I'm feeling," Clay rambled, animatedly gesturing with his hands before slumping again. Techno remained silent before humming slightly.

"Not necessarily. I personally think this is a normal reaction. Like you said, you haven't told anyone else about the stuff you told him, so that off the bat makes him different from everyone else. He knows you in a way no one else does, so now you don't know how to act around a person that can understand you to that depth."

Clay remained silent, letting Techno's words sink in.

It made sense, actually. He was suddenly so aware of George and felt nervous around him because George knew things about him nobody else did, which is why he didn't know how to act around him now because he wasn't able to put on that same mask he could with everyone else.

Clay stood up quickly, turning to look down at Techno who gave him a calculated stare in return.

"You're right. That makes so much more sense. Thank you so much, Techno," Clay grinned honestly, and Techno gave him the slightest smile in return.



George practically dragged himself up the stairs to Karl's room, still feeling the after effects of downing two full cups of alcohol the previous night. Karl trailed after him, continuing to persist he forget about homework and just get some rest for the night.

"Fine, fine, I will. Let me just check something first," George muttered as he flopped on his bed and pulled the laptop sitting on the nightstand beside him to his lap. Karl furrowed his eyebrows as he leaned forward and flicked George's forehead.

"You're being a nimrod, Georgie. You need rest! Oh, and I'll bring you more water, you need a lot of that," Karl decided, turning for the door and dashing back down the stairs to fetch George some water. George found himself smiling fondly at where the boy had just left, shaking his head slightly before turning his attention back to his now open laptop.

He didn't have to think twice as he moved his mouse to open his email, a new notification showing up in bold at the top of his inbox.

He still knew nothing about this "Dream" person, apart from that they were from the school he currently attended. He still had no idea who they were, if they were a boy, girl, or a person that didn't identify with either genders, or what was their reason to contact him in the first place.

So far, the two had been emailing back and forth every day since this Dream person first contacted George, Dream taking the lead in majority of the conversations by asking him questions about his day or other ordinary things you would talk about with someone, or with a friend, even.

Could George consider this person a friend? He had no idea who they were or what their true intentions were, but he didn't exactly actively attempt to end the conversations with them, either. It was almost nice, just talking to a faceless person about meaningless things, even if he never went into too much detail.

It had become almost routine now, to open up his email and find a new message from Dream. George clicked on the email that continued to have no subject every time, scanning over whatever conversation this person decided they would be having today.

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Hello georgenotfound,

Watchu up to? Did you miss me? :)

Might take a fat nap later,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George felt his lips quirking up slightly, instantly picking up in the change of tone in Dream's emails. While they had been friendly from day one, they seemed to be getting less formal in their emails. This one was especially casual, compared to previous messages they had sent him.

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

no longer keeping up the regal act, are we?

Reply Forward

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

Whatever could you mean. I do not know that of which you speak of.

Don't change the subject just cause you can't admit you missed me,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George rolled his eyes but found himself laughing softly nonetheless, his fingers tapping away at the keyboard of his laptop, making it sway a bit in the uneven position he has it placed on his lap.

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

your eloquent mask is beginning to chip away, Dream, admit it

also I didn't change the subject cause of that

Reply Forward

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

I have no eloquent mask. This is just who I am. Also, it's cute how you referred to me as Dream  
haha.

Just admit you missed me George,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George felt his cheeks warm the slightest bit. Which was an understandable reaction, of course.  
The cute comment had been a bit out of nowhere and George was taken by surprise.

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

that's how you end every one of your emails, so I just assumed you wanted me to call you that  
since you don't want to tell me who you really are

and no

Reply Forward

"What the honk?!" Karl screeched from the door, making George's body take a screenshot. He was  
holding a water bottle which he shoved into George's once he stomped over to him and then  
pointed at the laptop on his lap, his eyes narrowing to slits. "No laptop for you, mister. It is nappy  
time."

"What took you so long to get the water bottle," George chuckled slightly as he opened it to take a  
few sips.

"Oh yea, I kind of got distracted with some pretzels I found in the pantry, because I thought we had  
ran out, so then I started rummaging through the-" Karl cut off before glaring at George when he  
realized he was snickering over the fact that he had been able to change the subject for a second

and Karl had fallen for it. "That's not important! You need sleep!"

"I know, I know, I promise I will rest after I finish responding to these emails," George explained, drawing the laptop a bit nearer to his chest and away from Karl's sight. "I'm, um, responding to some teachers." He felt bad for lying, but how was he supposed to explain that a stranger had started emailing him out of the blue and he continued to go along with it? It was a long story, anyway, and he would tell Karl about it eventually.

One day, maybe. Just not right now.

"Alright, fine, but once you're done you better be in your jammies and passed out, you hear me?" Karl fake scolded like a parent, pointing two of his fingers at his own eyes before turning them to George, which George found amusing even as he accepted the conditions. Karl walked back out of the room, saying something about digging into those pretzels, which allowed George to turn his attention back to the new email he had just received in his inbox.

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

You can call me Dream. And I promise I will reveal to you who I am one day, but for now, allow me to indulge in this little mysterious person thing I have going on. It's kind of fun, if I'm being honest. I feel like a superhero, with the secret identity stuff, not the saving the day stuff.

Fine you don't have to admit it, I already know you missed me,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

can you at least tell me your pronouns or something..? if you're comfortable with mind me asking, of course

I did not.

Reply Forward

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to me

Georgenotfound,

Woah. First of all, you have my respect for asking in such a respectable way. Not enough people have the basic human decency to, so I'm glad you're one of the few that do. It means my first impression of you wasn't off at all. I'm glad :)

Secondly, does it matter what my gender is? Would that change things?

You totally missed me btw,  
Dream

Reply Forward

George felt his eyebrows furrow together, his teeth unconsciously chewing lightly on his lip.

Dream's gender didn't change much, it just revealed to George whether the person he was emailing was a girl, boy, or whatever else they identified with. It definitely narrowed down Dream's identity a lot, not that George was actively trying to figure out who this person was.

It might explain some messages, though, like the cute comment. Maybe it was one of the girls that was pursuing him? George wasn't entirely oblivious, he was aware girls were talking about him amongst themselves, he felt gazes strained on him a lot throughout the day as it was. So it was possible, but what if it was a guy? It could have just been a passing remark, or maybe a guy that was interested? George would have to let them down easy, if that were the case, since he didn't happen to swing that way.

He decided that for now it didn't really matter, because it could just be the way this person expressed themselves. He wasn't going to overthink it any further.

George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

thanks for thinking so, I guess

your gender doesn't really matter or change things by the way, I'm mostly just curious  
also stop.

Reply Forward

The response took longer to come in this time, but when it did and George read up to the very last line that he almost missed, he felt his heart stutter to a stop.

George slammed the laptop shut. He ignored the embarrassed blush that flushed his cheeks pink as he moved it back to the night stand beside him, his mind swarmed with a million thoughts as he dragged his hand down his face and sighed.

He needed sleep.

· ☹️ ▷ ◁ ☹️ ·

"Why do you look like that?"

Clay's attention turned to his doorway where Wilbur was standing, leaning a bit on the wall beside

him. Clay tilted his head slightly in question.

"What do you mean?"

"You were grinning all wide just now, and your cheeks are kind of red," Wilbur motioned at his own face with his finger, as if to emphasize his point. Clay felt his face warm slightly more at the call out as he coughed awkwardly.

"O-Oh, I am? I didn't notice..." he admitted, quickly putting his phone down beside where he was half leaning on the headboard of his bed.

"Who were you talking to, anyway," Wilbur asked innocently, before smiling slyly. "Was it a girl?"

"No, no, I wasn't talking to, um, anyone," Clay said quickly, feeling embarrassed that Wilbur thought his reactions were to a girl's texts when that couldn't be more wrong. "Just, looking through my Twitter feed."

"Mmhmm, right," Wilbur drawled unconvinced, but before Clay could get another word in he had walked back down the hallway with a smile playing at his lips. Clay huffed, grabbing his phone and rereading the message displayed on his screen.

He began typing a response.

He got a sudden wave of confidence, and decided to add a bold statement at the very end, his heart drumming too fast in his chest as he clicked send.

He fell backwards on his bed to lie down fully, his phone atop his chest as he closed his eyes and sighed.

He was acting like this because of the events of the day before. He was taken out of the loop, and he suddenly didn't know how to act. Technoblade's reasoning had made sense to him.

Right?

He placed a hand over his mouth and ignored the stupid smile that made its way onto his face under it as he thought about the boy that had been suddenly filling his mind for the past 24 hours.

No other reason.

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to georgenotfound@gmail.com

Georgenotfound,

Guess you'll have to continue being curious, cause I just now decided I won't tell you. Makes things more interesting, I think ;)

Also I saw you in between classes today. You looked like you were having a nasty hungover, or like you didn't get sufficient sleep, so I'll leave you now so you can get some rest. Karl's party's are cool but take it easy. Party hard, but don't party too hard next time, alright? I don't like seeing you all drained.

I'll email you tomorrow,  
Dream



P.S. whether you missed me or not, I missed you.

Reply Forward

## Chapter End Notes

Omg what, Clay is Dream?? Dream is CLay??? Wild.

Sorry for the almost late update, I kept my promise of updating latest within 7 days, but it came out slower this time because I had accidentally deleted the whole chapter and had to rewrite it. Pain. Hope you guys enjoyed it anyhow.

Also what. This story has over 800 reads on Wattpad but on here it has hit over 3000 hits that is insane I just- thank you??? This is crazy I love every single one of you guys.

Remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated <3

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 10

## Chapter Summary

George and Clay hang out.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Georgenotfound!"

George whipped his head around at the sound of footsteps nearing closer and a familiar voice calling his name. He spotted Clay among the crowd of people in the hallway as he wove through them, his eyes trained on George and an easy smile lighting up his face as he drew closer.

"Hey," George responded as the boy finally caught up to him, before Clay suddenly grabbed his arm and started dragging him the opposite way he was going.

"Wha-"

"Did George just get kidnapped," he heard Tubbo say behind him.

"Hey bitch, give us back George! I need him to attract all the women!" Tommy called out a second later. George glanced back at the group he had been walking with, being Wilbur, Niki, Tubbo and Tommy, who had stopped and were watching as Clay continued to pull him away from them.

"Sorry guys, I'm going to borrow him today! Have a nice lunch!" Clay called with a smile evident in his voice as he rounded a corner, leaving the group behind them and out of sight.

"Clay, what-" George turned to look up at Clay, only to find him already glancing back at him with a look he couldn't quite read. The taller boy looked away quickly, but kept his grip on George's wrist as he continued to lead them to wherever it was they're going.

"Sorry for sort of kidnapping you back there, but you're hanging out with us today!" Clay finally said as a sort of explanation, though George stayed as confused as before.

"Us?"

Clay only glanced back at him for a second with a smile too mischievous for George's comfort before they reached two large double doors. Clay pushed one open with the hand not still holding George in a death grip, leading him out of the building.

George squinted a bit at the sudden change of lighting from the sun's direct rays, realizing they were walking to the back of the school, somewhere he had yet to see himself. His eyes widened as a tall hedge wall spreading for several kilometers came into view.

"I didn't know the school had a place like this," George commented as Clay lead him to a section where the hedge suddenly stopped for a couple of feet before continuing, as if an entrance to within. Clay finally stopped in front of it, letting go of George and turning to face him. George tilted his head up to meet the other's eyes.

"What?" George asked a little nervously at the intensity of Clay's gaze. Suddenly, Clay whipped around and bolted through the entrance, making a turn out of sight. George stood shell shocked, his mouth open in confusion.

"Come and find me, George!" George heard Clay call from within, his voice getting farther. George looked around the place, turning back towards the building and finding that nobody else was near the area, before huffing and running in after him.

He turned the way Clay had, making another turn left before meeting two separate paths going different ways.

Then it hit George.

"Is this a maze?!" George screeched in alarm. He heard a cackle followed by a wheeze somewhere ahead, so George bolted towards the sound, running down paths he thought were right and reaching several dead ends, making him have to quickly retrace his steps and try another path.

He could barely hear the sound of Clay's footsteps somewhere in the maze, as well as his laughter and wheezes, which was the only thing George could try to follow. Even with that bit of help, he didn't know where he was going, running down whichever way his instincts told him to.

"Clay!" he yelled, getting frustrated when he was met with another wall of bushes, signaling another dead end.

"Ohhh Georgeeeee!" he heard him call back somewhere to his right. He dashed towards the sound, making turns left and right before making a left turn to a clearing within the maze.

He halted, his eyes widening as he took in the sight before him.

In the space at the center of the hedge maze was a large, glass dome building, what appeared to be some sort of habitat filled with trees and flowers of all sorts lining the walls inside. There was a walkway entering the place with a door in front of the small tunnel leading inside. George tentatively walked up to the door, opening it and closing it behind him before walking down the small hall to the second door, leading inside the dome.

He opened it slowly before letting out a gasp.

The trees lining the walls, along with flower beds and vines, had been covering the view of the inside. There was a garden of sorts set up in a semi circle, with tomatoes, carrots, and other vegetables being grown, a bench on either side of where the garden ended on both George's right and left.

And in the very center stood Clay, a large smile that made his eyes crinkle directed at George as he watched him take it all in.

Their eyes met, and Clay lifted a hand to point upwards. George looked up to see something fly by just above them.

Butterflies.

Dozens of butterflies were flying around the place, landing on the plants to rest before continuing their dance above their heads.

George didn't know how he didn't notice them earlier.

"Holy shit," George muttered as he continued looking around. He heard Clay let out a breathy laugh, walking up closer to where George was still standing, his mouth agape.

"The school put this together last year for a festival during spring, but was only ever used that one time. There's a gardening club that tends to the vegetables and fruits growing here along with all the plants, but since the place was crazy expensive to put together and the maze hedge is a burden to keep, they're going to tear it all down at the end of the year and use the space for something else. Probably portable classrooms or something," Clay explained, following George's gaze to look around the dome building as well.

"At the end of the year..." George repeated before turning to look at Clay. "So it's being torn down around the time I will be going back to England." Clay met his gaze, something almost sad flashing in his eyes before it was gone so fast George doubted it was even there to begin with.

"Yeah. You're going to be here the last six months they're going to keep it up," Clay nodded, leaning back a bit and tilting his head back to look up. George mimicked his movements, looking up at the sky seen through the glass and the butterflies flapping around in the space between them.

"Why did you take me here?" George asked as he moved to sit on one of the benches. Clay watched him, but stayed where he was standing. He shrugged one shoulder, a small smile playing at his lips.

"I wanted to be the one to show you this place. I'm glad nobody beat me to it," he grinned, his voice carrying a slight joking tone but his eyes looking at George with too much softness for his statement to be entirely dishonest.

George hummed slightly, ignoring the light fluttering in his chest.

"Earlier you said 'us.' That I was going to be hanging out with 'us.' Is someone else coming?"

Clay shook his head, finally moving to take a seat besides George. George turned to look at Clay's profile.

"Then? Where is everyone?" George asked, his eyebrows furrowing slightly. Clay tilted his head to look at him, a smile still present on his lips.

"They're already here," he said as he pointed at something beside George's head. George turned to look only to startle the butterfly that was perched on a leaf beside him, George and Clay's gaze following it as it fluttered to a flower on the other side of the room.

"The butterflies," George deadpanned.

"The butterflies, George."

George felt a soft laugh escape him as he shook his head, turning to Clay to see the boy already watching him.

"That's so dumb."

"You're dumb," Clay quipped with a smile. George rolled his eyes.

"And you're mean," George added, lifting a finger as if beginning to count Clay's flaws.

"You love me, George," Clay smiled smugly. George felt a sense of déjà vu at his words, his mind bringing him back to the party from two days prior.

"It's still only been like, 5 days, Clay," he responded, bringing his legs up to his chest to rest his head slightly, his arms wrapping around them. Clay scoffed.

"That's already like two more days than last time, though," he countered, making George roll his eyes at him, but he knew he was smiling.

"Whatever you say, Clay," George chuckled as he turned his attention to a butterfly that fluttered right in front of him.

"You didn't deny it."

"Shut up," George huffed as he shoved Clay's shoulder, who let out a wheeze at his reaction.

"I'm glad you're feeling better, by the way. You looked like someone ran over your cat yesterday," Clay chuckled. George shoved him again, but lighter this time.

"Yeah, and you were acting like I was the plague or something. You were already acting weird in the morning, all jumpy and stuff, but during the day I'm pretty sure you spotted me twice and immediately bolted in the opposite direction."

"Wha- I did nOt!" Clay practically squeaked, his face flushing in embarrassment.

"Don't pretend like you didn't, you totally did, I saw you," George laughed as Clay pouted and crossed his arms, turning his head away from him, probably to hide his reddening face.

"Not true. It was the hangover making you see things," Clay insisted.

"Then why is your face all red," George quipped as he lifted a finger to poke Clay's cheek. The other flinched and drew his face back the instant contact was made, swatting his hand away, his eyes going big and a little crazed.

"Don't do that," he muttered. George lifted an eyebrow at him.

"Don't do what? This?" George quickly poked his cheek again before he could react or stop him, causing Clay to draw back further and let out a sort of strangled sound.

"Yes, that," he hissed, putting his hands on the form of an X in front of his face as if to protect it from George.

"Why," George asked innocently, going to poke at Clay's side this time. Clay let out a yelp, flinching away from the touch, before they both froze. Their eyes slowly met, and George watched as Clay's face paled while his smile only grew.

"Clay...are you ticklish?" George asked slowly. Clay furrowed his eyebrows, scooting away from George.

"George, do not-"

George jumped at Clay, his hands falling to tickle at his sides. Clay's body immediately lurched forward, his arms trying to grasp George's arms to stop him as laughter that dissolved into wheezes poured out of him.

"George, please stop I can't-" Clay barely managed to let out between wheezing laughter that was beginning to get a little too wheezy. George stopped tickling him, lifting his hands in surrender.

"Woah, was I about to kill you just now," George asked as Clay recovered from the tickle attack.

His statement only made him burst out laughing, though, so at least if Clay did die from wheezing too hard, it wouldn't be by George's hand.

"Jesus Christ, you're so dumb. I almost peed my pants," Clay laughed as he began calming down. George gave him an unamused look.

"You really need to think of better insults, you can't just be calling me dumb every time. Where's your creativity, Clay?" George joked, tapping Clay's head with his knuckle before leaning towards it a bit. "Hello? Anything in there?"

"You're such an idiot," Clay laughed again, swatting him away. George leaned back, a smile he couldn't resist making his cheeks hurt.

"I'm starting to regret kidnapping you today, Georgenotfound," Clay joked, before turning to look down at his feet, his smile softening a bit. "I almost didn't, actually."

"Then why did you?" George asked curiously. Clay met his gaze, one corner of his mouth quirking up.

"Honestly, I want us to be friends," he admitted with an almost shy smile. George felt that weird fluttering in his chest again.

"You didn't think we were friends before?" George teased, watching with amusement as Clay's face flushed slightly as he scrambled to explain himself and say he didn't mean it like that. George chuckled, cutting Clay off. "I'm just teasing you. It would be cool to be friends."

Clay smiled wider now. He seemed to smile a lot, and yet George never got tired of seeing it for some reason. It was like his whole face lit up, kind of like a Christmas tree in the middle of the night. It was nice to look at, and you couldn't help but smile just from looking at it.

"Cool," Clay said, before his smile faltered and he cleared his throat, looking away. He seemed to be thinking hard about something, so George lightly tapped his shoulder against Clay's.

"What is it?"

"Oh no, just," Clay sucked in a breathe before grabbing something in his pocket and holding it out to George. George looked down at the small slip of paper before looking back up at Clay questioningly. He shifted uncomfortably, his face dusting pink as he refused to meet his eye.

"Well...I have a game today after school. A football game, I mean. I was wondering if you wanted to come watch, maybe? I had this extra ticket, it was originally for my older sister but she won't be able to make it, and my younger siblings don't usually come to my games so I thought I could give it to you. But you don't have that sport over there in the UK, so you might not be interested, so it's okay if you don't want to go, I can just give the ticket to someone else-"

"Clay, I'll come," George cut in before he could continue spiraling. He took hold of the ticket, Clay flicking his eyes back up to look at George and then down at their hands, releasing the ticket and watching George take it, his eyes big.

"Really?" he asked as if he didn't quite believe him. George rolled his eyes.

"Yes, really. I'll be there, so don't embarrass yourself in front of me," George joked as he stuffed the ticket in one of his jean pockets. Clay laughed a bit, and George relaxed at seeing a smile back on his face.

"Oh, I definitely won't. Not to brag, but I kick ass in football."

"When you're not having a tantrum, maybe."

"Shut up," Clay burst out laughing, shoving George lightly who snickered in response.

"Too soon?" George chuckled a bit. Clay sighed, shaking his head fondly before the two fell into a comfortable silence, their eyes following the fluttering of the butterflies as they continued their dance around the two.



George hung out with Clay for the rest of lunch period until they practically had to sprint to class because they forgot to check the time. They ended up being seconds away from being counted late.

"Where the honk were you," Karl and Sapnap hissed at the same time when he got to his seat just as the bell rang. George was a little taken aback by how in sync the two had sounded.

"I was with-"

"And don't say you were with your British friends either, cause I asked Tommy where you were and he said you got kidnapped! What the honk, dude, I was worried!" Karl whisper yelled as the class began and people were beginning to quiet down.

"I wasn't going to say I was with them, I was going to say I was with-"

"Hold on, dude, Clay wasn't with us either today," Sapnap cut in this time, his statement directed at Karl. Karl nodded, muttering a "true, true" just as George huffed in annoyance.

"Will you two stop interrupting me? I've been trying to tell you guys I was with Clay the whole lunch period!" George finally managed to get out. He spoke a little too loudly, though, and he had to glance apologetically at people who turned to look his way. Sapnap snapped his fingers.

"Of course! Clay is always with us during lunch, like, all the time. Dude has no life," Sapnap explained, earning a chuckle from Karl. "Well okay, unless he gets into a fight with someone in the group, but me and him already made up, and he hasn't gotten into any fights with the other boys lately. He only ever used to leave the group to hang out with his ex whenever she wanted to, but that was months ago and since they split he's been hanging with us everyday."

"Trueeee," Karl agreed, but his expression showed he didn't know where this was going. Sapnap scrunched his eyebrows a bit in thought before his face lit up in realization.

"That could explain his sudden interest, and why he was acting really weird yesterday, especially around-" Sapnap cut himself off, glancing for a second at George before shaking his head. "Nah, I'm probably overthinking this. There's no way."

"There's no way what?" George asked. Karl was looking between the two, also not understanding what Sapnap was referring to.

"Nah, it's probably nothing. I'll just ask Clay about it later," Sapnap said with a tone of finality, turning his body to the front of the classroom to show that the conversation was over. George overheard Sapnap mutter something about someone asking for an email, but he wasn't sure he heard him right so he turned his attention back to the front of the classroom, his head replaying the

last few minutes as he attempted to figure out what Sapnap had meant.



"Oh and George, there's going to be a football game later today. You should come, I'm going to be kicking ass," Sapnap declared proudly as everyone moved out of the classroom now that the bell had rung. Karl pouted beside him.

"What about me, Sap?"

"You know you're always invited, Karl. And I already gave you my plus one so why are you complaining," Sapnap sighed as he wrapped an arm around Karl's shoulder, who giggled in response. He turned to George again. "So you're coming, right? It starts at 7 and it might last around 3 hours."

"Yeah, I'm coming."

"Okay cool, you can buy a ticket at the front office. They're about 5 bucks which is a little expensive but I promise it's worth it-"

"They're 5 bucks?" George asked, his eyes widening a bit. "Is that like, almost 4 pounds?"

"I think so," Karl spoke up. Sapnap watched as George looked down in thought, biting his lip slightly.

"If you want, I can get you a ticket for you, I don't mind," Sapnap offered, but George shook his head.

"No, no it's not that. I already have a ticket," George explained before he began walking away, probably to his next class, but Sapnap stopped him by grabbing his shoulder, turning George around as Sapnap raised an eyebrow at him.

"Wait, you already have a ticket?" Sapnap repeated. George nodded as he pulled out the ticket from his pocket, Karl letting out a whistle.

"Georgieeee, did you get invited to the game by a girlllll~?" Karl sing songed. Sapnap was going to join in on the teasing when he got a good look of the ticket he was holding. Hold on, that wasn't one of the regular tickets-

"Clay gave me the ticket," George admitted. Sapnap's eyes widened, which made George rush to explain. "He said his sister wasn't going to make it, so he had an extra ticket and gave it to me. I just didn't realize it was 5 dollars. I should pay him back, right?"

"I mean, he gave you the ticket so I'm pretty sure he doesn't expect you to pay him back. But do whatever you feel is right, Gogy," Karl gave him a thumbs up, before turning towards Sapnap and taking in his expression. "What is it, Sap?"

"No, it's nothing," Sapnap waved him off. He knows his expression probably looked confused, so he put on an easy smile. "C'mon, gang, we have a class to get to."

"Oh shoot you're right. Let's go, Gogy!" Karl agreed, walking away with George in the direction of



their class. "Bye, Sap!"

"Bye, Sapnap," George echoed. Sapnap saluted the two before walking the opposite way, his gears turning.

What is Clay up to?

First he asks for his email, then he and George do who knows what at the party and end up passed out on George's bed, then he started acting weird around George for like a day, then today he spends the entirety of their lunch period together when he usually hangs out with their group.

Now he gives his plus one to George, saying it had been for his sister that lives across the continent and hasn't visited in months? He knew it was his plus one ticket because those given exclusively to the football team looked different from regular tickets. Plus, what about Wilbur? He could at least give it to the exchange student he's hosting, so why George?

Sapnap scrunched his eyebrows together in thought as he walked into his next class, spotting Clay at his usual table beside the window.

He was sitting backwards in his chair, chatting with Technoblade who sat behind him, Clay's hands waving around animatedly while Techno stared at him with a bored expression. Sitting beside Techno was Wilbur, who seemed entirely entranced on the topic of conversation, and Alex beside Wilbur in his usual spot, who cut in to the conversation to point something out before Clay and Alex burst out laughing, Wilbur smiling slightly while Techno face palmed at whatever he had said.

Sapnap moved to their area to his spot in front of Wilbur and beside Clay, saying hello to Punz and Jack Manifold as he passed by their seats more near the front. Alex spotted him first.

"Heyyyyyy, what's popping!" he greeted loudly, bringing the other two's attention to him. Techno briefly nodded at him in acknowledgement as Wilbur echoed a smaller "hello" while Clay swiveled back around in his chair to face him as he sat down beside him.

"Hey," Clay grinned, but Sapnap could tell the smile was a little forced and there was a twinge of nervousness pinching his features.

"Hey, Clay," Sapnap responded, raising one eyebrow slightly as Clay shrunk a bit in his seat. "So where were you during lunch?"

"Oh shit, just going to ask straight up. Tearing the bandaid right off, are we," Alex laughed and bounced in his seat, looking between the two and apparently enjoying himself. Techno leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms and looking at the two as well, probably curious as to where this would lead despite his attempt to seem as though he could care less. Wilbur glanced at Techno's reaction before turning to look between Sapnap and Clay curiously.

The bell rang just then, and Clay let out a low whistle.

"I would love to chat more, but it appears class has begun!" he said smugly as he swiveled in his seat to look towards the front. Sapnap narrowed his eyes at him.

"...after class," Clay muttered when he realized Sapnap wasn't backing down, speaking so softly that Sapnap wasn't even sure if he had heard him right at first. He nodded then, giving in and turning to face the front as well.

Oh, he was definitely getting to the bottom of this.



The second the bell rung, Sapnap immediately collected his stuff and got up, grabbing hold of Clay by his wrist and dragging him out of the classroom.

"Ooooh, someone's in troubleee," he heard Alex laugh behind him.

"Oh, Clay-" he heard someone else, by the heavy British accent he assumed was Wilbur, start, but was cut off by another voice.

"They probably want to talk privately. I can walk you to your next class," Sapnap heard Techno cut in before they were out of earshot and in the hallway. He whipped around then to stare at Clay, crossing his arms and raising an eyebrow as people rushed past the two. The two waited until everyone filed out of the classroom before Clay finally spoke up.

"I was with George," Clay said guiltily, as though he were admitting to his mom he stole a cookie from the kitchen. Sapnap rolled his eyes.

"I know. George told me."

"He did?"

"Yup."

"What...what else did he say?" Sapnap watched as Clay flicked his gaze away, shifting from foot to foot in a nervous manner.

Why was he acting like this?

"I don't know, was there something else he needed to mention?" Sapnap said instead, his eyes flickering over Clay's pinched expression. He wanted to hear Clay say it for himself, but instead he let out a strained laugh.

"No, no of course not. We just hung out."

"Liar."

Clay whipped his gaze back up to meet Sapnap's, his eyes widening in surprise.

"What?"

"You gave him your plus one to the game," Sapnap finally revealed the last bit of information George had given him, taking a step forward and jabbing Clay in the chest with his finger. "And you told him it was a ticket you were going to give your sister that won't be visiting until spring break. What was the point of lying about that? You could have just told him it was your plus one. Plus, what about Wilbur? Your exchange student? Aren't you going to give him a ticket, too?"

"Well I-" Clay started stammering, but he wasn't done.

"And since when do you lie to me?" Sapnap asked, his voice breaking a bit at the end. Clay looked down at him with a pained and guilty expression. "You've been acting weird since the party. You won't tell me what happened between spin the bottle and you passing out in bed with George."

You've been acting weird around the guy since then, and now you're running off with him doing who knows what and you're not telling me anything! I thought we tell each other everything, Clay."

"We do-"

"Well clearly not, because you're leaving me out of the loop on this new friendship you have going on with George. If it even is a friendship," he muttered the last bit, but Clay heard him as clearly as if he had shouted it. He took a step back as if he had slapped him, his eyes narrowing.

"What's that supposed to mean."

"I don't know, Clay. Look, I've known you since middle school, and I know you. The way you've been acting around George..." Sapnap trailed off when he saw a sudden flash of fear in Clay's eyes. He could practically see Clay closing in on himself in front of his very eyes, and Sapnap's voice caught in his throat as it finally hit him.

"Are you going to finish your sentence?" Clay asked, but Sapnap could hear the slight quiver in his voice as though he feared that he would.

Had Clay come to the same realization Sapnap did?

There's no way he was this dense. He had to have realized, or had started questioning it at the very least.

Or was he trying to convince himself otherwise?

"I...I don't know where I was going with that," Sapnap lied instead, for Clay's sake or his own, he didn't know. Saying it out loud would make it real, and by the expression clouding Clay's face at the moment, he didn't seem to want it to. "Look, point is it sucks not knowing what's going on with you. So I just wish you could talk to me, man, at least about this. I don't want this to be a repeat of the accident."

Clay flinched slightly at the mention of it, but began stammering out, "Yeah, I get that. I'm sorry, I just..." Clay seemed to be struggling to find the right words, so Sapnap put a hand on his shoulder, forcing him to meet his gaze again.

"You know I won't judge you for anything, and I love you no matter what, right? Nothing will change that," Sapnap said softly. Clay's eyes softened as he nodded, encouraging Sapnap continue. "If you don't want to talk about it, like you didn't want to talk about the accident, I get it. Just tell me and I'll back off."

"No, it's not that, I just need...time," Clay sighed, rubbing a hand tiredly at his eye. "I need to sort my thoughts out first, figure out what the hell is even going on in my head before I can start even trying to say...any of it...out loud."

They both realized what he meant by "any of it," but neither said it out loud.

"I'll wait until you're ready. Just, once you are, I hope you don't hesitate to talk to me. I'm here for you, always."

"Thank you, Sapnap, I really appreciate it," Clay smiled genuinely now, making Sapnap smile in return.

"Anything for you, brother."

And the two embraced, unspoken words drifting languidly above their heads, waiting for the day they could finally be said aloud.



Clay was walking up to his next classroom to find Techno and Wilbur standing by the doorway, deep in conversation. His eyes widened when he saw Techno pull out his plus one ticket and hand it to Wilbur, who took it and smiled widely before patting his shoulder in a friendly manner. Clay was surprised to see Techno not pull away from the touch like he usually would with new people, and instead say something in return, an almost ghost-of-a smile playing on his lips before he turned and walked away.

Wilbur noticed Clay then, flashing him a wide smile he hadn't seen often on the British boy's face.

"Look Clay, I got an invite to your game! I'm going to get to watch that sport you Americans get into so many arguments over," Wilbur grinned, waving Techno's plus one ticket. He felt guilty then that he hadn't been the one to give him a ticket to the game, just as Sapnap had called him out for before.

"I was going to get you a ticket," Clay said, but Wilbur waved him off as they entered the classroom.

"It's okay, Techno had already told me he would give me his plus one days ago. He would have beat you to it, one way or another." Clay was surprised to hear this, but he didn't comment on it.

"Oh. That's great, then," Clay answered as the two sat down in their seats. He said hi to a few people in the classroom, including Bad who sat in the seat in front of him, and Tommy and Tubbo who were in the seats beside him and in front of Wilbur. Tommy and Wilbur began arguing about something, Bad cutting in any time a profanity was said, but he tuned them out, turning to stare out of the window beside him.

A bird flew down to land on the branch of a tree outside. He watched as it ruffled its white wings a bit, hopped around before taking flight again. Clay sighed.

He was still replaying Sapnap and his conversation in his head. He always felt guilty hiding things from him, but he didn't know how he would even begin to explain any of it. It felt special to him, somehow, and if he said any of it out loud he felt it would all just go up in smoke.

Poof, gone.

He rested his head on his arms, his mind swimming.

He thought of George.

How he had this overwhelming feeling of wanting to get closer to the boy. How he felt so safe around him, despite him knowing the secrets locked inside of the deepest nooks and crannies in his mind he had yet to open for anyone else.

He thought of his smile. Of his soft laugh.

"The way you've been acting around George..."

Sapnap's words echoed in his mind as he finally allowed himself to acknowledge the fluttering he had begun to feel around the British boy.

How his heart rate seemed to speed up like it usually did at the start of one of his football games, full of adrenaline and excitement and anticipation.

How his cheeks would heat up in embarrassment when George would tease him back, something that didn't seem to happen around anyone else.

How he suddenly began overthinking his actions around him when he was usually so sure of himself and in everything he did.

"The way you've been acting around George..."

He hated that Sapnap knew him well enough, and Clay knew Sapnap well enough to know exactly what he was going to say. Clay squeezed his eyes shut, the unspoken end of that phrase echoing loudly in his mind.

"...was the same way you acted around Sam."

Clay didn't pay attention for the rest of class.

## Chapter End Notes

Big fat chapter to make up for the fact I was gone for so long. Had originally only meant to take a break for a week but due to finals and getting my grades wrapped up right before winter break it extended more than I meant to, but I'm officially back to weekly uploads!

This is the turning point in the story where we finally start to see some feelings bubbling underneath the surface maybe?

This story has hit over 5k hits now which is absolutely insane! Thank you all so much for the support, I love reading all the comments you guys have left me, they're such a great motivator :]

Also, I have a Twitter and Instagram if you guys want to follow me on other platforms I'm more active in! I like to draw as well, and have posted my works on there :] check me out @ kirbakiii (notice the three i's) and lmk if you came from this book! Would love to interact with you all <3

This got stupidly long lmao so I'm ending the author's note here, sorry for boring you guys! And as always, remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated <33

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 11

## Chapter Summary

The football game (1/2)

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

George was silently looking outside the passenger seat window, his elbow resting on it with his chin on his hand, watching as trees and buildings zipped by before disappearing from sight. Bumps in the road would make him jump and lose his grip every once in a while, making him fumble awkwardly before going back to his still posture, contradictory to his racing thoughts.

The game would be in a few hours. He didn't know why, but now that school had ended and they were heading home to get ready for it, he was starting to feel nervousness etching in the back of his mind.

He didn't know what to expect. He didn't even really know how these games worked. Would he have to cheer? For Sapnap? Clay? Who else was on the football team that would be playing today? Was he going to have to sit on a bench the whole game and just watch a sport he didn't even fully understand?

Not that he didn't want to. Or really, he wasn't even sure if the reason why he was suddenly so nervous was because he didn't want to watch the game, or because he might get bored.

George didn't like not knowing what to expect. That's what made him nervous now that an event in which he didn't know what the outcome would be or how it would go was drawing near.

And yet, when Clay had offered him the ticket, he had been on board immediately. Maybe even a little excited, though he would never admit that.

"Are you excited, Georgie?"

George whipped his head toward Karl, startled by the question and seriously wondering if he was a mind reader. His eyes were still on the road ahead of them, but there was an easy smile playing on his lips.

"What do you mean?" George said instead, eyeing Karl warily. The other boy didn't seem to notice the hesitance in his question as he shrugged one shoulder, glancing for a second in his direction with a smile.

"You don't have this type of football over there in the U.K., right? So this is your first game!" Karl grinned boyishly as he slowed the car to a stop, waiting for the light to turn green. He turned to fully look at George now. "You must be excited, right?"

"I mean...I guess," George answered slowly, drumming his fingers against his lap. He thought back to the time he sat with his friends during lunch on the bleachers in the football field and got front row seats to the football team's practice and Clay's temper tantrum. He didn't mention it, though. "I guess I'm mostly nervous. I really don't know what to expect. I don't even know what you wear to

one of these things."

"A crop top and a tiny skirt, duh," Karl answered automatically as he turned his eyes towards the row again once the light turned green, setting the car into motion. He glanced to take in George's baffled expression before bursting into a fit of giggles.

"You were joking. Of course you were," George rolled his eyes as the other calmed down from his laugh attack.

"No, no, George, I am being completely serious right now. We are dressing up as cheerleaders, you and me. We're going to be Sap and Clay's personal cheerleaders." And then in a ridiculously high pitched voice, Karl began chanting to an invisible audiences. "S! A! P-N-A-P! You love Sapnap and so do we! C! L! A! Y! You love Clay and so do I!"

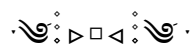
"Only you?" George asked, amused. Karl huffed.

"If I said 'we' it wouldn't have rhymed, George. C'mon, you're supposed to know this as Clay and Sapnap's personal cheerleader."

"Right, you're right. Must've skipped that part in the cheerleader manual," George joked, making Karl snicker. "You still haven't told me what I'm supposed to wear, though."

"Don't worry, Gogy, I will dress you in the finest linen in all the land. You will be the best looking guy there. Every lady within a 5 meter radius will take one look at you and instantly fall head over heels madly in love, mark my word."

George laughed a bit and shook his head, turning to look back out the window. "Okay, Karl. Whatever you say."



The next few hours after arriving home, George felt like he was stuck modeling for a fashion show. He had thrown on a random short and a pair of pants, but the second Karl glanced his way, he gasped like he had laid eyes on the most grotesque thing to ever exist and began demanding he change into an actually "decent fit."

Karl then proceeded to squabble about his terrible sense in fashion after going through practically all the clothes he had brought with him and deemed them all embarrassments to the fashion industry. In the middle of searching through his clothes, George realized he was missing a hoodie and a pair of pants, but when he mentioned it to Karl he just made a joke saying "good riddance," so George decided he would look for it later. Karl then took it upon himself to share some of his own clothes with George, and they spent another hour having George try on different things until they found one that fit.

"Twirl for me," Karl smiled teasingly, flicking his finger in a circular motion. George rolled his eyes.

"I'm not going to twirl for you," he laughed a bit, but moved to look at himself in the large mirror propped up in the living room.

He was wearing a white button-up shirt under a dark, navy sweater, and black, semi-loose pants

with a pair of white converse.

"Now that's a fit," Karl said proudly. "I have so many better fits, of course, but you're so tiny they look like dresses on you."

"Shut up," George huffed and shoved Karl lightly, who let out a string of giggles before beginning to walk back towards his room upstairs.

"We'll be leaving in a bit, let me just finish getting changed!" Karl called as he ran up the stairs. George felt the nervousness he had been feeling in the car start creeping back, so he drew in a long breathe and let it out in a shaky sigh.

He couldn't just back out now.

He had promised Clay he would go, and he was planning on fulfilling that promise.

It's okay.

He could do this.

·☺: ▷ ◻ ◁ :☺·

Dream < dreamwastaken@gmail.com >  
to georgenotfound@gmail.com

Georgenotfound.

Hey George! How have you been? There's a football game today, do you plan on going? I am, I heard it's going to be really good. The competition is fierce, but I'm sure our team will emerge victorious, as usual. We have one of the best teams in the city, so I really do think we will win this game.

Also, sorry if my last email was a little too direct, or if it made you uncomfortable. I'm also sorry for pushing you to say something you might not be comfortable saying, if it genuinely upset you please let me know and I promise to back off. I just really like talking to you, sorry if that sounds weird, but it's true.

Hoping things are okay between us,  
Dream

Reply Forward

·☺: ▷ ◻ ◁ :☺·

Clay was feeling the familiar rush of adrenaline he felt right before a game. He was bouncing from foot to foot, cracking his knuckles before moving to suit up in his football gear. He could feel his heart pounding in his ears, making his hands shake slightly even as he forced them to steady.



"Shake it off, Clay. Shake it off. We got this."

Clay grinned at Sappap's words, turning to see him shaking his arms, then his whole body a bit, hopping from foot to foot. Clay copied his movements, attempting to shake out the nervousness he usually felt before a game but knowing it would remain present until the game actually began.

"Woo! Pre-game shimmy!" Skeppy came up beside them, mimicking their movements and making Sappap chuckle as he moved to pull his kit over his head. Callahan grinned and wordlessly joined in, pulling a laugh out of Clay.

The locker room was noisy and bustling with activity, as it usually was whether there was a game or practice, but a special kind of buzz was always evident specifically for pre-games. The whole team was trying to shake off nerves in favor of hyping each other, and themselves, up.

"Have you guys seen Sam?" a voice behind them asked. Clay flinched involuntarily at the name before his mind reminded him which Sam they were referring to. He turned towards the voice, meeting the gaze of the taller blonde some ways behind him, his distinctive heterochromatic eyes looking worried. "He's the only one missing."

"Mother fucker is late," Schlatt spoke up, rolling his eyes as he continued changing into his gear.

"He should be here soon, don't worry," Clay responded to Ranboo, who nodded a bit and returned to putting on his gear. He watched as Callahan silently patted Ranboo's back, probably as a means to tell him it would be alright. He had meant to ease Ranboo's worries, but now Clay felt a similar prick of nervousness as he glanced towards the locker room door.

"Dude, take your own advice," Sappap laughed a bit and patted his back playfully, and Clay felt himself smile at how well the other boy could read him.

"Nerves are natural. It means you're ready to face a challenge and perform. So don't fight it, simply relish in it and morph it into something positive," Technoblade spoke up from his spot on the bench where he was tying his cleats. Clay grinned down at him.

"You always give good advice, Techno-"

"Besides, fear is a great motivator," Techno cut Clay off, grinning up at him, his sharp canines in full view and his eyes glinting darkly. Clay laughed a bit, albeit awkwardly.

"Techno, please take no offense to this but, sometimes you are just absolutely terrifying," Schlatt commented dryly. Techno turned to him before shrugging.

"Sam!" someone spoke up, and Clay resisted the urge to flinch this time. Sam walked in through the door, rushing to get his things together and get changed.

"Sorry I'm late, guys, I got the times mixed up," Sam huffed a bit out of breath, ruffling his brightly dyed green hair as he set his things down on a bench. Clay still wasn't sure how he was allowed to come to school like that.

"Didn't Coach email you the schedule?" he heard Skeppy ask. Sam's face scrunched up as he gave an explanation of his mix up, but Clay tuned them out after the mention of an email. He found himself picking up his phone, looking through his notifications for a specific one.

"What's up?" Sappap asked, peering over his shoulder. Clay shut his phone off and opened his locker again to leave it in there before swinging it shut again.

"Nothing, I was just expecting an email," he said truthfully. Sapnap hummed, thankfully not pressing any further. It wasn't a big deal anyway, George was probably busy getting ready to come to the game and just didn't have time to respond to his email.

It didn't have anything to do with the last email he had sent him the day prior which may have been a little too forward and scared George away.

Probably.

"You ready, Clay?" Sapnap spoke up. Clay turned to him, nodding. He had been overthinking way too much all day long, but now wasn't the time for those lingering thoughts and doubts, or to be questioning...whatever it was he was feeling. He needed to focus on this game, so for now he would leave all thoughts of George aside.

"Let's do this."

As the football team began making their way out the locker room, Clay stepped weirdly and felt a jolt of pain shoot through his leg. He winced, having mostly forgotten about the wound he had gotten during the party in the forest behind Karl's house. It had mostly healed, but the wound was still there.

It was okay though, he was fine.

He could do this.

·☞◁◁◁☞·

"Is it always this noisy?"

"Oh yeah, always. Our school takes games really seriously because we have a lot of school spirit and all of that," Karl responded before reaching back into his bag of popcorn and popping a handful in his mouth. George could barely hear him over the commotion of the crowd, either sitting on the bleachers or walking around. Most of the bleacher's spots were already filled as it neared closer for the game to start.

"Karlosssss!" a distinct voice managed to yell over the bustle of the crowd.

"Hey, Alex," Karl responded. George turned to watch as the boy from spin the bottle, Alex "Quackity," maneuvered his way to sit beside Karl, stealing a bit of popcorn from his bag despite Karl's protests.

"Georgeeee, how you doing, man," he asked next, leaning in a little into Karl's space to look at George. George felt his lips pull up slightly.

"I'm doing good."

"That's good, dude, that's good," Alex pulled back then, stretching his arms above his head and yawning. "I legit took a fat nap before coming here, but I'm still feeling a little sluggish. You're going to have to make sure I don't fall asleep, Karl, so entertain me."

"I'm not good at entertaining," Karl responded. Alex whipped his head to look at him, his eyes

narrowing.

"What the fuck do you mean you're not entertaining, man. You're one of the funnest people to be around at this school, that's why you host the best parties."

"Awee, Quackityyy," Karl giggled and side-hugged the smaller boy, Alex responding with a string of curses at the nickname. George tuned them out when he felt the bleachers shift again, and turned to see someone was now sitting at his other side. Blue filled his vision (though in reality, it was purple) and he felt himself startle.

"Oh, Minx," he blurted as the girl side eyed him. She grinned slightly, and George felt his face heating up slightly.

"Hello there, George."

She was wearing dark makeup that made her eyes pop, her hair styled into a ponytail with loose strands framing her face at the front. George noticed she was wearing some type of uniform, with a crop top and skirt with the school colors and a really oversized letterman jacket hanging loosely over it and covering her up. Before he could ask what the outfit was for, another, softer voice spoke up.

"Hi George!" Niki appeared from beside Minx, grinning softly, so George smiled back.

"Hey, Niki."

"Look Wilbur! I found your girlfriend, and her girlfriend!" Tommy shouted and pointed from a few rows down, before beginning to cackle as Wilbur smacked him upside the head. George caught sight of Tubbo beside the two, waving aggressively at him, so he waved back with a small grin. The three of them made their way towards them before moving to sit in the empty seats in the row behind them.

"I like your buns, Niki," Wilbur commented, patting the two panda buns of her blonde hair at the top of her head, the rest of her hair loose. George watched Minx attempt to hide her smirk by bringing a bottle of water up to her lips as Niki played with a strand of her hair, smiling up at the boy.

"Thanks, Wil, Minx helped me-"

"That's something incredibly inappropriate to say, Wilbur, have you no manners," Tommy cut in. Minx spit out the water she was drinking as Niki's smile fell, Wilbur's face dusting red.

"Tommy, I swear to fuck-" Tommy started cackling loudly as Wilbur grabbed him in a choke hold, the blonde boy squirming and attempting to escape, but to no avail. Minx had burst out laughing before falling into a coughing fit while Niki covered her face in embarrassment.

"Hey, woah, are you okay," George asked, his hands hovering over Minx's shaking shoulder as she continued to cough between laughter. She waved a hand in his direction, turning her face away from him.

"I'm fine, I'm fine, just- the water-" she attempted explaining between coughs. George began patting her back lightly, for lack of knowing what else to do. That made Minx turn her gaze back to him, her big, light blue eyes meeting his own and drawing him in, George unable to look away.

"You know that doesn't actually help the coughing, right?" she said once she had stopped coughing, her mouth quirking up at the edges in amusement.

"I mean, you stopped coughing," George responded automatically. Minx's eyes widened a bit in surprise at his response, as if she hadn't expected it, before a full on smile lit up her face as she raised an eyebrow.

"Okay, okay, I see you George. You're a little smartass, huh," she chuckled a bit, leaning towards him and tilting her head slightly. George felt himself swallowing roughly. "Bet you think you think you're hot shit too?"

"Not exactly..." George began, before he thought back to the party and their last interaction. He felt a smile pulling at his lips despite attempting to keep a straight face. "You were the one that thought I was the handsomest male in the room, remember?"

"Holy shit, George! You fucking killed her, dude!" he heard Alex start to laugh loudly behind him, having probably been eavesdropping on their conversation, followed by a long, drawn out "oooooh" from Karl. George watched with satisfaction as Minx pulled back slightly, her face flushing scarlet as she began stammering in the midst of her embarrassment.

"What- no that was just- I didn't- Oh, shut the hell up already, Quackity, it wasn't that funny!" Minx hissed at the boy who was practically bawling from laughter, so much so he didn't even bother rebuking the nickname. She turned back to George, who couldn't help but find it adorable how she was now pouting, her face still a bright red. "Whatever, George. I knew I should have picked the goat guy over you."

"Did you just call Schlatt 'the goat guy'???" Alex asked before losing it and laughing even harder. Karl had to hold on to Alex's back so he wouldn't accidentally fall backwards and into the space of someone behind him.

"Minx, I think someone is calling you," Niki spoke up quietly, tapping her shoulder before pointing down at the field. George looked in the direction she was pointing to spot a girl with bright, blue hair waving from a spot on the football field. She was wearing the same uniform Minx was, except she wasn't wearing a letterman jacket over it. She looked vaguely familiar, and George soon realized it was the same girl that had played spin the bottle and kissed Clay. Celestia, was it?

For some reason, looking at her now made something twist uncomfortably inside of George.

He ignored it.

"Oh shit, I was supposed to go back already but got," Minx glanced at George before quickly looking away again. "Distracted. Anyway I have to go, enjoy the game Niki, and," Minx looked over at Alex as she got up, her face screwing up in disgust. "Everyone else, I guess."

"Love you too, Minx," Alex rolled his eyes fondly, and George could tell Minx was trying to hold back a smile. She took off her letterman jacket and chucked it at Alex, who in the midst of his surprise was unable to stop it from hitting him smack in the face. "Hey!"

"Take care of that for me, it's Schlatt's," she rolled her eyes before she started walking away, glancing back one last time to flash a small, almost secret smile at George.

George felt his heart skip a beat.

"Damn Minx, you player! You going after the whole school now?" Alex called behind her. She flipped him off without turning around as she made her way down the bleachers, George unable to look away from her retreating back.

"Georgie, you're drooling~," Karl teased, elbowing him slightly. George finally snapped out of it,

whirling around to look at him as he felt his face flush.

"I'm not, shut up," he huffed in exasperation, making Karl giggle as he started teasingly poking him while George attempted to make him stop. Alex gaped at him.

"Oh my god, George. Please tell me you're not interested in Minx," he nearly pleaded. George started sputtering.

"What-?! No no, I don't- I'm not that's- that's crazy," he stammered out. Karl looked unconvinced, a sly smile stretching his lips, while Alex gave him a deadpan look.

"George, out of all the girls, why Minx? Minx?? You could've picked like- I don't know, Celestia or something."

"No but Celestia likes Clay, remember?" Karl spoke up. Alex flicked his gaze at Karl, his eyes wide with surprise, before they went back to a normal size when he seemed to remember the events of the party.

"Oh shit that's true, I forgot they kissed at the party."

"Well, technically she kissed him," George blurted out without thinking. Karl and Alex looked at him with weird looks, and George felt like he wanted to dig up a 6 foot hole and burry himself there.

Why had he said that?

"I mean, same difference. They still kissed," Alex shrugged. George had to physically stop himself from spewing more nonsense by covering his mouth with his hand.

Why did he want to correct him so badly? Mention how Clay had looked after the kiss, as though he would have wanted to be anywhere but there at that moment?

Why was this bothering him this much?

"To be fair, Clay seemed really uncomfortable after it. He even left the room and everything," Karl pointed out. George felt the sudden urge to hug him, but refrained from going through with the action.

"Speaking of, what was that about, George?" Alex asked, turning the attention back to him. George blinked owlishly at the two.

"What do you mean?"

"Yeah, how come he left the room all of a sudden? Was it really because of the kiss?" Karl added. George felt himself growing more and more confused, his eyebrows furrowing together.

"How am I supposed to know?" he responded. Karl and Alex shared a look.

"Well I mean, you did go after him, remember..?" Alex asked slowly, as if George was a little kid that wouldn't understand what he was asking. George was about to say he didn't go after him when a vague memory of getting up and leaving after Clay clouded his mind, but most of what happened after being blurry or completely blank.

"Shit, I don't...I don't remember," George admitted, placing a hand to his head as he tried to think. Remember. But everything afterwards seemed to have been erased from his memory, and the next

thing he recalls clearly was waking up in different clothes the next morning with a terrible hangover. "I vaguely remember getting up and going after him, but after that I don't...I don't know..."

"Shit," Alex huffed under his breath. Karl seemed like he wanted to say something, but kept his mouth shut in a tight line. Instead, Alex spoke up again. "Well I mean, you can ask Clay, since you went after him. He can probably fill you in on the stuff you don't remember, if you guys were really together during that chunk of time."

"Yeah, I guess I can ask him," George muttered, but he suddenly felt as though there was something really important he was forgetting, unable to shake the feeling away. He felt like he had a puzzle nearly complete, but was missing several of the pieces in different spots of it. Had something important happened between him chasing after Clay and waking up in his bed the next morning?

"I'm pretty sure you spent the rest of the party with Clay, so he'll fill you in," Karl finally said. George couldn't help but feel there was something else Karl knew but wasn't saying, but before he could ask music started playing from the field and everyone on the bleachers started yelling and cheering.

"I don't know what the fuck is happening, but I want to yell, too!" Tommy shouted behind him. George couldn't help but laugh at the way Tubbo and Tommy started whooping and hollering along with the crowd.

"Yeahhh baby lets go!! Let's go!!" Alex clapped excitedly as Karl whistled loudly. George turned his attention back to the field, noticing the football team huddled on one side. A group of girls that had the same uniform as Minx and Celestia made two lines, one facing their side and the others facing the opposite side where the opposing school was sitting. In front of the football team, a marching band was lined up, and George realized they were the ones playing the music.

They suddenly marched forward, between the 'tunnel' of girls, playing a song he didn't recognize. Karl briefly mentioned it was the school's fight anthem, so George watched as they dashed forward to the center of the field all while performing.

The beat of the music dropped, and suddenly smoke was shot into the air and the crowd was cheering even louder than the music itself as the school's football team ran in between the two lines, as though it were a runway, following after the marching band as each of the girls started doing flips towards the bleachers as the team members passed by them.

That's when it finally hit him.

They were cheerleaders.

"Minx is a cheerleader?!" George yelled over the noise. Alex started laughing, and Karl grabbed his shoulders and shook him lightly.

"Yes, George, where have you been the past 10 minutes? She's even wearing a cheerleading outfit, get it together!" Karl said jokingly, and George couldn't help but smile bashfully back at him.

"Guys! I'm here, I'm here," someone yelled over the noise. George watched as Darryl, or Badboyhalo, made his way up the bleachers to them before sliding in to the spot where Minx had been sitting previously, beside George. "Hello there, Niki."

"Hi Bad!"

"Darryl," he reminded her, before turning to George with a big smile on his face. "Oh hi, Larry."

"Oh hi, Mark," George responded automatically. That pulled a laugh out of Bad, who covered his mouth and waved around.

"Sorry, sorry. I didn't mean to call you Larry, bad habit of mine. But that was a funny reaction. How are you doing, George?"

"I'm doing good, thanks for asking," George responded with a small grin. Tommy suddenly leant forward and popped his head between the two, turning towards Bad.

"Hey Badboyhalo, were you with your boyfriend, just now? Is that where you had gone?"

"What?!" Bad squeaked, turning bright red. "Skeppy is not my boyfriend, you muffin! And I was just wishing him luck before the game!"

"But you like him, I reckon," Tubbo added in, making Tommy snicker.

"No, I don't! Stahp it!!"

"George you should see him, we have to live with this guy so we know. We are like, victim to their interactions day in and day out, every fucking day, I tell you. He is totally obsessed with that Skeppy guy, they're constantly all over each other all the time, I swear on it. It's kind of gross, if I'm being honest, they're like, super lovey dovey and shit," Tommy continued shouting over the cheering still going on, and even over Bad's attempt to shut him up by covering his own ears and screeching "LALALALA I CAN'T HEAR YOU YOU'RE LYING ALSO LANGUAGE LALALALA" over and over.

"It's true, I can totally vouch for that. They also fight like a married couple, it's actually quite hilarious!" Tubbo agreed.

"BadBoyHalo, I feel terribly sorry that you have to deal with these two for the rest of the semester," Wilbur spoke up, patting his back solemnly. Bad let out a loud groan and Niki attempted to hide the fact that she was giggling.

"Your friends are funny, Georgie," Karl spoke up. George turned to him with a strained smile, which made Alex burst out laughing.

"Look, there's Clay!" Wilbur pointed at the field. George turned to the cluster of guys in football gear but was unable to differentiate who was who.

"How can you tell which one is Clay?" George asked.

"Because of the numbers! Clay is number 4, and look! There's Sapnap talking to him, since he's number 8. And that's Skeppy over there, wearing the number 14," Bad explained, pointing at each of them on the field.

"Actually, I recognized Clay for another reason," Wilbur admitted. When George turned towards him with a questioning gaze, he quietly explained to George, "You see, he's been limping slightly since the party. It's not as noticeable anymore, but sometimes he still walks a little weird. I noticed, and that's how I was able to tell it was him!"

"A limp?" George asked. Wilbur shrugged, apparently not knowing more, and turned back towards the field. George did the same, his mind reeling.

Clay had been limping since the party?

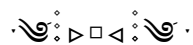
How did he not notice?

Did he know the reason behind the limp, but couldn't remember?

"Please rise for our national anthem," a voice boomed from the speakers. The crowd began quieting down, and everyone began standing up, placing a hand over their hearts. George stood up as well, not knowing what was happening but watching as a girl walked into the middle of the field with a mic.

It was Maia.

She sang the national anthem, ending with a roaring crowd of whistles and cheers as she walked back off the field, and the game began.



The referee blew the whistle, and just like that it was halftime. Clay skidded to a stop, nearly running into the guy from the opposing team that was in front of him. He had been in the middle of making a play, but unfortunately didn't have the sufficient time needed to reach the end zone.

He handed the ball over to the ref as he, along with everyone else, made their way to the sidelines. The coach was shouting something about a good first half, to keep it up, but Clay wasn't exactly listening as he took off his helmet.

It was true they did well in the first half. They were 14 to 2, but he knew better than to get overconfident and accidentally slip up. Anything could happen in the last two quarters.

He glanced at the marching band that was performing several stand cheers as the cheerleaders begun shouting chants and doing flips to get the crowd hyped up for the second half. His eyes briefly stayed on Celestia, her electric blue hair too hard to miss, before a churning in his gut made him look away again.

"Clay, look," Sapnap came up next to him, handing him a water bottle before pointing at the bleachers ahead of them. Clay looked in that direction to see a crowd of people waving in his direction.

Wilbur was practically towering above the rest, with Tommy and Tubbo beside him, who were waving enthusiastically at him and Sapnap. In the row right under was Niki, Bad sitting beside her (though his attention wasn't directed at them, but rather in the direction of Skeppy who was a few feet away from Clay and Sapnap), and beside Bad sat both Karl and Alex, also waving dramatically at the two and letting out embarrassingly loud whoops while shouting his and Sapnap's names along with several shameless statements.

And in between Karl and Bad sat George.

Clay had forced himself not to look for George in the crowd the whole game to avoid getting distracted, but now that he knew exactly where he was sitting, he openly stared at the boy.

He wasn't looking in his direction, but rather to his left, at Karl and Alex. He looked to be



embarrassed at how loud the other two were being, a timid smile curling his lips upward as he watched them with amusement.

George then turned his head to the field, and as his eyes met Clay's time seemed to slow.

George's smile disappeared a bit at first, before it slowly crept back before coming on in full force, a big and beautiful smile lighting up his face entirely and making his eyes crinkle a bit at the edges, directed at Clay and Clay alone. Clay felt as though all the air in his lungs had been sucked out of him in that moment, and he could hear his heart pounding loudly in his ears, all other noises around him muted in comparison.

He watched as George almost timidly raised his hand and waved a bit, his mouth opening and his shoulders shaking slightly in a laugh Clay was unfortunately too far away to hear. Almost in a daze, Clay felt himself smiling stupidly back, raising his own hand and waving.

He felt Sapnap elbow him lightly, but he didn't have to look over at him to guess what he was probably thinking.

Clay could blame what he was feeling on the adrenaline of the game, that high he usually felt playing his favorite sport, but he knew all too well that this feeling was different.

Way too different.

His heart continued to hiccup as he swallowed roughly, his gaze still trained on George as though a beacon were pointing directly at him and everyone else in the crowd were a blur in the dark.

His cheeks were starting to hurt as he raised a hand to drag it down his face and hide the stupidly large smile he knows was still present on there.

He was so fucked.

## Chapter End Notes

Really big chapter, and this is only half of the events of the football game! Excited to finish the next half, things are about to go down :]

In the next few days I'll be going back to edit all of the chapters since I haven't done that, so if the next update comes a few days late that's probably why! I'll try my best to have it out in a week, though!

Also, thank you to everyone who has left a comment, you guys seriously brighten up my days more than you know. I appreciate every single one of you reading too, I love you guys with my whole heart and I hope you guys know that you are loved and cared for, all of you!

Remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated! I care about you guys a whole ton, so please do take care <33

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 12

## Chapter Summary

The football game (2/2)

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Sapnap! Oh Sapnap you're so incredibly hot! You play with that ball so well!" Karl screamed.

"Please, oh mighty football star Clay, can I get your autograph on my bare ass?!" Alex was quick to follow, somehow even louder than first.

George felt himself flushing, looking over at the shameless display of the two, who found fun in catcalling the two football players while people surrounding them turned to give them funny looks. Despite how embarrassing the situation was, he couldn't help but feel an amused grin curling his lips upward as he watched the loud duo continue to have their own twisted fun.

George turned his attention back to the field only to lock eyes with Clay. He was standing besides Sapnap, a water bottle in hand, unopened and long forgotten as he stared openly and directly at him.

He felt his smile drop slightly as his stomach did a weird flip.

Without meaning to, he broke into a broad smile as he jerkily raised a hand and waved at Clay, followed by a nervous laugh that bubbled out of him when he realized how dumb the movement probably looked. He didn't feel too bad about it because Clay grinned widely and waved back, his eyes never leaving George's even as Sapnap elbowed him. George's eyebrows furrowed together, though, when he watched Clay drag a hand down his face, suddenly seeming tired or even overwhelmed.

"Hey Karl, how much is left of the game?" George asked, cutting Karl off from what was probably going to be another shameless statement he would declare for the whole stadium to hear. Karl pulled out his phone and checked the time, then looked back up at the field, watching the football players take their break and the cheerleaders continue their performance, before turning back to face George.

"Once half-time is over I'd say there's about a good 30 minutes left of game play," Karl responded. "I mean hypothetically, usually ends up being longer. Why? Do you want to leave already? We can go home now if you want, Georgie."

"No, no, it's not that," George said quickly, turning back to notice Clay was no longer looking his way and was instead talking to Sapnap, his eyes looking a little dazed and his cheeks flushed pink, probably from the exertion of the first half of the game. "Just, Clay looks a little exhausted. I don't know."

Alex had quieted down beside them, watching Clay and Sapnap attentively. Karl spoke up again. "He does look a little more out of it than usual, but I'm sure it's just nerves. It's the first game of the

season, after all. Clay is really competitive, so sometimes he gets in over his head."

George watched as Clay walked over to the group of football players huddled together. He stepped weird and George caught him wince, but then continued walking as if nothing had happened. George felt worry furrow his eyebrows further, but he remained silent. George hoped Clay wasn't forcing himself to play while hiding an injury, but he had played the whole first half with no problem, and really well, at that, so surely he wouldn't have been able to do that with a serious injury, right?

George sighed and decided he would stop fretting about it. It was probably nothing, and he could always ask Clay about it after the game. Besides, Clay could take care of himself, and surely he would know when he was pushing his limits too far.

"Oh shit hell yeah!" Alex suddenly yelped in excitement. George turned to see a girl handing a plate of nachos to Alex. She had bronde, straight hair that cascaded down her shoulders, and she was wearing a black cap on her head. Alex took the nachos excitedly, digging in and practically stuffing his mouth to the brim, garbling out, "Thank you so much, Puffy!"

"Sure thing, Quackity," she responded, amusement evident in her voice. "You owe me."

"I don't owe you shit, you just called me Quackity," Alex huffed out heatedly, but the fact that his mouth was still stuffed made him sound and look more ridiculous than anything. 'Puffy' crossed her arms and rolled her eyes.

"And you continue to insist on calling me Puffy, so I think we're even," she quipped, before nudging Alex and reminding him to share. He grumbled as he extended the plate of nachos covered in melted cheese to Karl, who giggled happily before taking a few for himself. When he offered some to George he declined, and that's when Puffy seemed to notice his presence besides the two.

"Oh hey, you guys are the exchange kids, aren't you?" Puffy asked, motioning towards George and the rest of the group sitting around him, who were too busy talking amongst themselves to notice her. George nodded, which made Puffy smile. "Welcome to America then. I'm Cara."

"Puffy."

"Shut it, Alex."

"Hi, Puffy!" Bad was the first to notice her presence, flashing her a kind smile. Alex snickered at the name, making Puffy shoot him a glare. This managed to cut whatever argument Wilbur and Tommy were having short as the two along with Niki and Tubbo turned to assess her as well.

"Bad, the only reason I'm letting you get away with calling me that is because you agreed that you preferred me, discount Skeppy, over the one over there," Puffy grinned, pointing out Skeppy on the field who currently had his head tipped back as he chugged a Gatorade. The expression on Bad's face did a complete 180 as he let out a strangled noise, his eyebrows furrowing as he pointed a finger at her.

"That's not true! I never said that! I had said I appreciated you taking Skeppy's place while he was home sick-"

"Oh my god Bad, you replaced Skeppy with Puffy?" Alex gasped, dropping the nachos to his lap. "What about me, Bad. I thought I was your best friend."

"Skeppy is my best friend!"

"He's your best friend? Oh alright, in that case I'm your boyfriend, right?"

"WHAT?!"

George watched as Bad shot to his feet and started yelling at Alex over George's head. Alex, who had stood up as well to argue back, a malicious smile on his face as he let out cackles in delight, clearly found amusement in getting Badboyhalo worked up. George turned to Karl, who had taken possession of the nachos and was eating away at them happily.

"This happens often. You get used to it," Karl waved above his head as the two continued squabbling above them, and George cracked a grin. Just then, the marching band that had been performing reached the climax of the song, and the stands began roaring with cheers and applause. George turned back to the field to see both teams rushing back onto it, the second half of the game about to start as the marching band moved to sit in their section in the bleachers. They continued playing music that had the crowd hyped as the game began.

George watched as number 4 positioned himself in the lineup as he silently prayed that nothing would go wrong.



Clay should have been more careful.

It had been the final quarter. The other school was slowly gaining on them, but not fast enough that Clay felt panicked. He did, however, know that he needed to make this touchdown to assure they stayed in the lead.

Schlatt, the team's quarterback, threw the ball towards the end zone, in the direction of Clay. He was running as fast as he could, pushing through the tingle of pain on his leg he had been feeling the whole game on his injured leg, glancing back at the ball spiraling through the sky above their heads. He dodged a few players from the opposing team successfully, his other team members trying their best to slow them down so Clay could make the final stretch.

"Clay!" he heard Technoblade yell behind him, and he knew it meant one of them had gotten out of their reach and was gaining on him now. Clay pushed forward, turning backwards as he was about to make it to the end zone. The ball was above his head and he lurched up towards it, catching it in mid-air. He was still airborne when the guy that had been gaining on him tackled him, sending him backwards. His injured foot landed on the ground roughly as he stumbled backwards, sending a jolt of pain far greater than any of the previous ones he had felt as he felt a popping sensation, and he fell on his back, making the air get knocked out of him as he clutched the ball tightly to his chest.

"Touchdown!" the crowd was yelling and cheering, and Clay would have been smiling if he didn't feel like his ankle had just been bent the wrong way. He sat up, wincing at the shot of pain through his leg, and as he accepted the hand of the guy that had tackled him, he stumbled and nearly fell back to the floor.

"Shit," he hissed as he stood on the foot that didn't feel as though it was split in two. He couldn't even rest his weight on the other foot without feeling intense discomfort on his foot.

"Clay, are you alright," Techno came up beside him, and soon Sapnap, Skeppy, Callahan, and Sam were by his side as well. Clay tried to step forward but felt the same strain on his foot, hissing as it

throbbed painfully.

"Shit Clay, I think you sprained an ankle," Sapnap said as he moved to his side, wrapping an arm under him and allowing Clay to lean his weight on him. "You can't play like this."

"I'm fine," Clay insisted, but he knew nobody believed him. Sapnap helped him hobble over to the benches, where his coach congratulated him on the touchdown but told him he was done for the game. Clay remained silent as he was set down on a bench.

"Stop sulking, idiot. The game's almost over anyway, and you scored us a touchdown," Sapnap grinned fondly as he lightly knuckled Clay's head, and Clay felt himself smile softly at him.

"Win this game," Clay responded, and Sapnap jokingly saluted as he rushed back onto the field. The coach put in Antfrost to play in his place, and he felt himself deflate on the bench as sudden exhaustion overcame him.

"Give him ice and wrap that foot in a bandage, he should be fine," he heard the coach say, probably to the school nurse. He assumed that's who was walking over to him, so he didn't bother looking up and instead stared at his throbbing foot with annoyance.

His leg had been in a delicate state already, so he shouldn't have been surprised by how easy it was to get a sprained ankle.

It still sucked, though.

"Hey, Clay," a voice said beside him. Clay froze, his stomach dropping, his throat suddenly dry. He whipped his head up and saw not the school's nurse, but a girl with black hair cascading down her shoulders, wearing a grey sweater with a baby pink skirt overall over it. In her hands were bandages and an ice pack.

"Where's the nurse?" Clay asked with lack of something better to say. The girl assessed his expression carefully before shrugging and moving to kneel in front of him, taking his foot into her hands. Clay watched dumbly as she slowly took off the cleat from his injured foot, biting back the pain that jolted from the action.

"I think she's out today. I volunteered to help out, so," she explained. Clay hummed, watching as the girl slipped his sock off his foot too, her eyebrows furrowing at the bruise that was starting to form on his ankle. She grabbed the bandages and began wrapping it around his foot, Clay gritting his teeth and digging his nails into the bench as she did so.

"It's swelling, so this should compress the ankle until the swelling stops," she explained.

"Your hair," Clay blurted out. The girl flinched, but didn't look up. "It looks different."

The girl was still staring at his foot, but she wasn't bandaging it, as if his words had frozen her in place.

"I decided to dye it black. Last week, actually," she said finally, almost hesitantly.

She still wasn't looking at him, and Clay felt himself frown.

"What was wrong with your blonde hair?"

"Technically my hair is brown. I had dyed it blonde, remember?"

"Oh. Right," Clay muttered. The girl finished bandaging his ankle and stood up, handing him the ice pack she had.

"Press this to your ankle for 15 to 20 minutes. It should help decrease the swelling also," she said almost robotically. Clay grimaced, making the girl's own face twist in discomfort.

"Um. Thanks," Clay responded. The girl stared at him for a moment longer before nodding, turning to walk away. Suddenly, Clay felt himself lurching forward a bit, ignoring the jolt of pain on his leg and raising a hand as if that would stop the girl from walking away. He finally remembered how to speak, and let out strangled-

"Sam."

The girl froze again and turned around, her eyes a bit wide. Clay felt himself swallowing roughly as he met eyes with his ex-girlfriend.

"How...how have you been?" Clay asked. Sam looked even more surprised at the question, her eyes as wide as saucers as her mouth dropped open slightly. Something twisted in her expression as she responded.

"I've been okay."

"Okay," Clay nodded. He coughed awkwardly. "Um, good. That's good, I'm glad."

"Yeah," she responded, and with that she turned again and walked away, not for the first time.

Clay turned back to the ice pack in his hand, his expression darkening as he felt an uncomfortable swirling in his stomach. He hadn't talked to Sam in months, and talking to her now out of nowhere had been more upsetting than he expected it would be. His stomach felt especially upset, and he bent over slightly as he clutched it tightly.

He felt like throwing up.

And then, he did.

Clay wretched on the grass below him, just barely missing his shoes.

"Oh my god Clay," one of his teammates that was on the bench some ways away said, and he distantly recognized it as Ranboo's voice. Ranboo came up beside him as he threw up his lunch, his throat uncomfortably raw as he gagged from the disgusting taste of bile in his mouth. He felt Ranboo rubbing comforting circles on his back as he straightened again, wiping his mouth as he suddenly felt a stinging behind his eyes. He blinked quickly, taking in a shaky breath.

"Hey, are you okay?" Ranboo asked. Clay nodded, despite feeling the complete opposite.

"Yeah, I'm fine. I don't know what that was," he admitted. He turned to Ranboo, who had a concerned look on his face.

"Clay, are you alright?" the coach came up to him and asked next. Clay nodded, but before he could get another word in, a yell made him freeze.

"Clay!"

He whipped around to see three people stumbling down the rows of bleachers and making their way to him hurriedly, concern coloring all of their expressions. His eyes widened as he watched

Karl, Alex, and George draw near.

"What are you-" he started, but cut off in surprise when George suddenly came up to his side, sidestepping his puke and helping him up from the bench by wrapping an arm under him and hoisting him to his feet, allowing him to lean his weight on him instead of his injured foot. Clay's face immediately heated up as he looked at him with wide eyes, George's face close. Too close.

"Coach, we're taking him back inside the school so he can freshen up, is that okay?" Karl spoke up. The coach looked at the four of them for a few seconds, his eyebrow arching upwards, so Clay spoke up, "I actually do have to use the restroom. I'll be back in a bit, they can help take me there." Coach sighed and nodded, telling him to be quick, and with that George, Karl and Alex started leading him away from the stadium and back towards the school.

"This will be easier if you put your arm around my shoulder, you know," George spoke up, side-eyeing him. Clay realized he had his arm stiffly between the two of them, making it awkward to walk, so he jerkily moved his arm and wrapped it around the back of George's neck, feeling flustered and hoping his face didn't look like a tomato.

"Thank you, George," he responded, sounding almost timid. At that George cracked a smile, and turned to Karl and Alex who were staring at Clay like he was an injured puppy.

"You guys can go back and watch the end of the game, I'll take him," George insisted. Karl looked ready to rebuke, but Alex stopped him.

"C'mon dude, he's got this," Alex assured Karl. Karl looked at George with a torn expression.

"But then you will miss the end of the game!" Karl pointed out.

"It's okay," George responded. He glanced at Clay, and Clay felt a fluttering in his stomach as their eyes met. "I'm sure there will be more games I'll be able to watch in the future."

"Vamonos, Karlitos," Alex said as he began pushing Karl away, who looked like someone had kicked his puppy. "Feel better, Clay!"

"Yeah, Clay, I hope you feel better!" Karl called back after, and the two made their way back to their seats on the bench. George started walking again, and Clay limped as best he could while not stepping too much on his hurt ankle.

The sun had already set, and back in the football field the place was lit up with the stadium lights, but as they walked away from it and back towards campus, the darkness of the night engulfed them both. They remained quiet as they walked, Clay wracking his brain for something to say but coming up blank, the only sounds heard from the chirping of crickets, the wind blowing in their ears and the almost muted sound of the marching band playing as the crowd continued to cheer in the distance.

"You pushed yourself too far, didn't you," George spoke up suddenly. Clay turned to look at him, noticing the genuine concern etched into his expression, drawing his eyebrows down as he stared forward.

"What do you mean?"

"You were already limping from an injury, and I convinced myself you wouldn't push yourself if it was serious but," George sighed, glancing at him for a second before looking away again. "Here we are."

"You were worried about me?" Clay asked, his voice coming out more breathless than he'd liked. George huffed exasperatedly, his grip on Clay's back tightening slightly.

"Is that the only thing you got out of that? Yes, I was worried, idiot."

Clay looked away, feeling his heart start drumming happily in his ears as he bit back a smile. They arrived to double doors leading into the school, and thankfully they had been kept unlocked and the lights inside turned on despite the time. George pushed the door open and lead them inside, the school eerily silent and uncomfortably empty.

"It feels so weird being in the school at this time," George whispered. Clay snorted, and George turned to give him a weird look. "What."

"Why are you whispering," Clay said, speaking quietly to mock George.

"It feels weird to talk normally. It's so quiet."

"Okay, weirdo."

"Clay I will drop you."

Clay let out a loud wheeze, George rushing to shush him which only made Clay laugh harder.

"George, you're such an idiot," Clay said once he stopped laughing, his voice dripping with unmasked affection. Thankfully George really was an idiot, because he merely grumbled an insult back in response.

They arrived to the restrooms in one of the hallways, and George led him to one of the stalls, holding it open for him.

"Go in there and do your business, I don't know," George said, flushing a bit after his words hung in the air awkwardly. Clay snorted again, limping into the stall.

"You didn't exactly think that statement through, huh," Clay chuckled. George grumbled a shut up as he moved to stand in front of the mirror, looking through his phone while Clay took a dump.

Clay limped back out, wincing whenever he put pressure on his sprained ankle and washed his hands. George watched him quietly.

"How come you threw up? Are you feeling sick?" George asked, seeming as though the question had been on his mind for a while. Clay dried his hands with paper towels, the noise of them crinkling echoing within the walls of the otherwise quiet bathroom.

"No, I'm not sick. I don't know, I just suddenly felt all queasy and next thing I know I'm seeing my lunch in front of me for a second time today." George laughed softly, which made Clay smile. It dropped again when he recalled what made his stomach churn in the first place. "I spoke to Sam today."

Clay turned to look at George, expecting to see a concerned face, or maybe even a serious one, but what he was met with instead was clearly written puzzlement etched into his features, no recognition to the name evident on his face at all.

"Sam?" George asked. Clay nodded, almost hesitantly. Had George forgotten already?

"Yeah. My ex-girlfriend." Recognition lit up George's face now.



"Oh yeah, Maia mentioned you had an ex-girlfriend," George said. Clay's eyebrows furrowed.

"Maia?" he repeated, his gut starting to twist uncomfortably. "I told you about my ex, though?"

"You did?" George responded, perplexity returning onto his expression. He shook his head. "No, you haven't told me about your ex. I didn't even know her name was Sam."

"George, I literally told you about her at Karl's party. In the woods, remember?" Clay asked. George's face screwed up in further confusion.

"In the woods? But I didn't..." he trailed off, looking down at the floor as he thought hard, racking his brain for a memory he apparently could not find. "I went into the woods?"

"You don't remember...anything?" Clay asked in disbelief. He didn't even realize he had begun silently hoping George was kidding, that he was just messing with him, that this was all some kind of sick joke that only he found funny, until he felt his heart sink as he watched George genuinely look at a loss for words. "George?"

"I remember up to spin the bottle, but after I got up to chase after you everything gets fuzzy," George began rambling, pressing a hand to his head as he drew his eyebrows together in thought. "I don't remember much else. Just waking up the next day in bed in different clothes. Karl told me to ask you what happened because he said I was with you the rest of the party."

"So you forgot everything I..." Clay trailed off, suddenly feeling lightheaded. He stumbled and clutched onto the edge of the sink, ignoring the jolt through his leg as he felt his head start pounding even more painfully. George moved to his side to help steady him, but he hardly registered the movement in the midst of his daze.

"Clay, hey, are you okay?" George asked. Clay mumbled a yes but felt himself swaying, so he leaned his weight onto George's side without realizing. "Do you need water or something?"

"I think..." Clay swallowed, his throat suddenly dry. "I think I want to go home."

"Oh. Oh, okay." George grabbed hold of the small of his back, allowing Dream to tuck his arm over his shoulder. "Let's get you back, then."

They silently made their way back out of the restroom, walking down the hall in silence, Clay's mind oddly void of thought.

They were almost to the double doors leading outside when they heard some voices down a hall to their left, the two not having passed it yet so the people remaining out of view. Clay paused, George stopping as well and turning to look at him questioningly.

A guy's voice.

"So you don't feel anything for him? At all?"

A girl's voice, softer but firm, responding.

"I don't, I already told you. How many times are you going to make me repeat myself?"

Clay felt his heart stop.

He recognized that voice.

"I'm sorry if it's a little difficult to believe you," the guy muttered.

The girl scoffed. "What's that supposed to mean. I'm dating you, not him."

"Dating someone hasn't stopped you before. You were with him when we first hooked up, so I'm sorry for having doubts about your loyalty."

"Clay?" George whispered beside him. In the quiet of the halls, though, his voice practically boomed, and the voices ahead of them quickly quieted. Pattering of footsteps, followed by a boy and girl their age emerging from around the corner of the hall.

The guy looked vaguely familiar, someone Clay had seen around the halls maybe but not interacted with. Short brown hair, leather jacket, pretty average looking.

And standing beside him was Clay's ex-girlfriend.

"Clay," Sam practically gasped, a shell shocked look pinching her features. Clay's expression hardened, and Sam flinched under his scrutinizing glare. She at least had the decency of looking guilty as her gaze flickered away from his intense one.

"Let's go, George," Clay said, glaring daggers at the girl he would have once gone to the moon and back for. Staring at her now, though, he only felt distaste and boiling anger at the revelation he had just heard, all feelings he once felt towards her dissipated entirely. He flicked his gaze away as the two began walking towards the double doors once more, exiting the building. Clay didn't once look back.

"Was that her? Your ex?" George hesitantly asked. Clay felt a sinking feeling all over again at the reminder that George had forgotten everything. He had laid himself completely bare to him that night, for what felt like the first time, and for what?

Everything he had such a hard time saying out loud, had finally been said aloud to George alone, had been wiped from the shorter boy's memory.

"That was Sam, yeah," Clay finally said quietly when he realized he hadn't responded to George's question for a long enough time for it to be awkward. George hummed, and Clay suddenly felt sick again, bile rising in his throat that he forcibly swallowed down, making him cringe.

They walked back to the stadium in silence, where Clay told the Coach he would be taking his leave. He was dismissed for the rest of the game, and George texted Wilbur that Clay had decided to leave. Wilbur, the kind soul, quickly made his way down from the bleachers and came up to Clay's side.

"I'll take him back to the locker room. I'll see you on Monday, George," Wilbur had said. George had merely nodded, finally detaching himself from Clay's side for what seemed like the first time in hours as he mumbled a goodbye to the two, and a wish that Clay felt better soon. Clay felt drained, both mentally and physically as he allowed Wilbur to help him limp over to the locker rooms to gather his things and then head to his car. Wilbur insisted on driving, and Clay didn't protest because he knew he wouldn't be able to hit the gas with his sprained ankle.

"Let's just hope I can drive this thing correctly. I'm used to the wheel being on the opposite side," Wilbur admitted. Clay was too tired to worry.

Before they pulled out of the parking lot, Clay suddenly jolted upwards when he remembered something the events of the past 30 minutes alone had managed to make him forget.

"Wait, Wilbur, can you text George and tell him to come over here really quick? I forgot I have his clothes I borrowed that I need to return," Clay said in one breath. "Please."

Wilbur sent a text to George, and they waited a few minutes until George came running up to Clay's side of the car. Wilbur had reached into the backseat and gotten the hoodie and pants Clay had borrowed and washed, and Clay held the articles of clothing in his lap now as he rolled down the window.

"Hey, what's up," George said, breathing a bit heavily from having run from the football field all the way to the parking lot. His gaze trailed down to the clothes Clay was now holding out to him through the open window, and he gawked at them with wide eyes. "Wait, how did you get these?"

"Something else you forgot about Karl's party," Clay said, his voice coming out monotone, masking what he really felt within. He shrugged as if it wasn't a big deal, when the reality was that George having forgotten everything that happened between them was weighing heavy on Clay's heart, having hurt him more than he liked. "You had let me borrow it. Sorry for not returning it before. I washed it."

"Oh. Thank you," George said a bit haltingly as he took the clothes from him and tucked it under his arm. Clay could see the clear confusion mixed with lingering worry drawing George's eyebrows together even in the dark, and he knew George could tell Clay was acting off.

"I'll be okay George. Enjoy the rest of the game," Clay tried to force a smile but it fell short, and George gave a similar strained one in return as he took a step back from the car. Clay rolled up the window as Wilbur set the car into motion, and they left the parking lot in quietude, Clay watching George wave goodbye through the rear view mirror as he grew smaller and smaller until he was completely out of view.

Clay felt a stinging in his eyes as he shut them tight, leaning his head back to rest on his car seat, letting the loll of the car rock him to an in between of wake and slumber. He drifted in and out of consciousness as he thought of the dumb injury he got during the game, of his ex-girlfriend that he found out cheated on him, of the life-altering injury he caused his sister to have, and of everything he admitted to George that went forgotten in the boy's mind.

He let out a shaky sigh, and fell asleep to the low humming of the car's engine.



George < georgenotfound@gmail.com >  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

hey Dream, sorry I'm just now getting back to you. the football game was an overall interesting experience, there's still a lot of stuff you all do here that I'm not used to exactly, but it was fun. for the most part at least, a friend that's on the team got hurt, I'm guessing you know who I'm referring to if you were watching the game. I would be lying if I said I wasn't worried, especially since other stuff was brought up too, and he looked upset and I don't know what to do if I'm being honest. I feel like I messed up somehow, or I let him down, and it sucks cause I genuinely don't know why or how

sorry for rambling, I don't even know who you are and I'm dumping this all on you. sorry for being vague about it too, you probably have no idea what I'm even saying but I don't think he would like it if I went into detail about his issues with someone else

and things are okay with us. I was caught a bit off guard, but it didn't make me uncomfortable or anything. but thanks for being understanding all the same

wow this got rlly long for some reason, it's like I wrote you a whole essay haha. sorry for boring you. but yea, don't worry about scaring me off or anything

to tell you the truth, I guess you've started growing on me. you didn't hear that from me tho

have a good night Dream

Reply Forward

## Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone, I've revived to bring you all another update :)

Going to go back and revise it in the next few days, sorry for grammar errors and such! Wrote most of this half conscious, so sorry if it's not that good haha,,

Also thank you to the people that helped me out in the comments last chapter by telling me about their HS football game experience! It helped me out a ton, considering I've never been to one myself lol I rlly appreciate you guys :]

As always, take care of yourselves guys! I care about you all a lot, so take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated! Please!!

- Kirbs -

# Intermission

## Chapter Summary

intermission chapter

see end note for more details on this :]

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Holy shit, holy shit five seconds Karl holy shit-"

"Alex, he's going to make it! He'll make it- OH MY GOD HE MADE IT!"

"TOUCHDOWN HOLY FUCK!"

"LANGUAGE, QUACKITY!"

The stands erupted in deafening cheers and whistles, everyone on their feet and making the bleachers shake beneath them as their school let out a chorus of screams in celebration. All the players that had been seated in the bleachers stood up and dashed onto the field, the whole team running towards the lone player throwing the ball down to the ground in celebration at the end zone. They surrounded him, some playfully hitting his helmet as one proceeded to lift him up onto his shoulders, piggyback style. The player that had made the touch down pumped his arm in the air as everyone cheered him on.

"THAT'S MY HUSBAND!" Karl screeched, though his voice was drowned out by the ongoing cheering surrounding them. Alex punched him in the shoulder.

"I thought I was your husband, Karl."

"You both are."

"That one was for you, baby!" a scream from the field drew their attention back, Karl's smile widening when his gaze found Sapnap's, who had taken off his helmet and was looking back at him, a killer smile lighting up his face as he pointed up directly at Karl. Karl let out a string of giggles as he clapped for him before blowing him a kiss, which Sapnap pretended to catch with an exaggerated swoon and wide grin.

"I'll let this slide just this once, only cause we won," Alex grumbled, but he was smiling wide at Sapnap and proceeded to clap aggressively while yelling "Let's go!!" Karl smiled fondly at the shorter boy before his attention was drawn back to the field as a booming voice erupted from the speakers surrounding them.

"Don't leave just yet, we have a final, special performance from our cheerleading team and marching band with a few very special guests coming up!" a girl declared as the stands erupted in another wave of surprised cheers and whistles. Karl giddily grinned with excitement and surprise bubbling inside of him as Alex nudged his shoulder.

"Special performance? Have they always had those at games?" he asked over the noise all around them. Karl shrugged.

"I don't think they have, most people seem as surprised at us," he responded, before noticing a few of the football players had broken off from the group still celebrating at the end field and were dashing off, Sapnap amongst them. "What are they doing?"

Karl and Alex watched as Sapnap, Technoblade, Skeppy, Sam and Callahan jogged towards the exit and in the direction of the campus building.

"Hey Bad, do you know where they're going?" Karl turned to notice Bad was already watching the group retreat, confusion etched into his features.

"I don't know...Skeppy didn't tell me anything," Bad mumbled more to himself, furrowing his bottom lip between his teeth in thought. He suddenly turned towards Karl and Alex, a determined look in his eyes. "I'll be right back, will you guys look after Tommy and Tubbo for me, please?"

"We don't need babysitters," Tommy scoffed suddenly, revealing he had been eavesdropping on their conversation. "I'm a big man, I can take care of Tubbo and myself."

"Why am I the one that needs to be taken care of," Tubbo crossed his arms in a huff, turning on Tommy. "I'm literally older than you."

"Shut up I don't care."

"No, you shut up!"

Karl watched with some amusement as the pair began squabbling like 5 year olds, making Bad sigh heavily and look as though he was already getting a headache. He muttered a quick goodbye before moving past Niki and down the bleachers, breaking out into a run after the group that had left the stadium.

"Never did I think I would see BadBoyHalo break off into a run like that. Guess people will do anything when they're in love, am I right guys," Alex laughed loudly, lifting his hand towards Tommy and Tubbo, who stopped bickering to stare at his outstretched hand. "Cmon, I'm so right, up top!"

Both boys immediately dashed forward to meet his hand in a high five, but Tubbo was faster and Tommy's ended up hitting the back of Tubbo's hand.

"Oi, he was asking me for the high five," Tommy whined. Tubbo huffed and rolled his eyes.

"Well too bad, I was faster!"

The two began another round of arguing as Alex looked away with them with an amused smile, letting out a loud whoop as he punched the air in celebration.

"I'm back! What did I miss?" a familiar voice said beside him. Karl watched as George scooted past Niki to sit back down beside him. Karl finally sat down again, grinning widely at the British boy that in the span of a few days had become one of his dearest friends.

"George, you missed the best part of the game!" Alex cut in before Karl could get a word out, sitting back down to lean towards George. George turned his attention back down to the field, probably taking note of the fact that their school's team was currently being dumped with green colored Gatorade and yelling wildly in celebration. The bleachers on the opposite end of the field

were beginning to empty as the away team's school began trickling out, probably not interested in watching their school's "special performance."

"It's over already??" George asked bewilderedly, making Niki giggle a bit beside him. Karl patted his back solemnly while nodding.

"Game's done, but we won, George! We are the champions!" Karl shook him excitedly, riling Alex up all over again.

"That's right baby! Weeeeeee are the chammmpionsssss, my friendddddd!" Alex began singing loudly, wrapping an arm around Karl and swaying them back and forth.

"Hey Alex! Come down here for a sec, yeah?" a voice with a thick accent shouted from the field. Minx was standing beside Schlatt, a hand on her hip as she gestured for him to hurry. "And bring the jacket!"

Schlatt leaned closer to Minx to say something Karl couldn't hear, making her screw her face up at his smug look as she seemed to let out a groan before adding a loud, "Please! For fucks sake."

"Got to go, see you guys later," Alex patted Karl's shoulder with a grin, following that action by reaching over him to ruffle George's hair, who swatted at him in protest. He waved briefly at the rest of the exchange students around them before setting off down the bleachers towards Minx and Schlatt, Karl watching him go with a grin. Music began pouring out from the field's speakers as Karl turned back to George.

"We're going to stick around for a bit longer because the cheerleaders want to put on a performance, but if you want to go home now we can leave."

"No, no it's okay, we can stay," George responded, and Karl was surprised to notice his smile didn't reach his eyes. He glanced down at the clothes he was holding in his lap, something he hadn't noticed before.

"What's that?" he pointed at it, George stiffening and instinctively gripping it tighter.

"Oh- uh, it's Clay. I mean, it's from Clay, that's why he called me over there, not that the clothes is Clay," George began stammering before clearing his throat. "He had it for some reason. Apparently I let him borrow it at the party but I...I don't remember."

Karl saw guilt flash in George's eyes, making his eyebrows furrow as he began feeling a reflection of the same emotion.

"Did you ask him about the party?" Karl asked softly. He felt his heart sink as he practically watched George close in on himself right in front of him, his eyes darkening as his expression fell into neutral. He shrugged.

"I did, but uh...he didn't get to tell me much about what happened. And he seemed..." George trailed off as turned to stare back at the field, his eyebrows furrowing the slightest bit. When Karl realized he wasn't going to finish his sentence, he forced a smile and patted his back lightly.

"You can ask him about it again on Monday, once he's rested and feeling better I'm sure he'll be happy to tell you," he grinned encouragingly, nearly sighing in relief when George gave him a small, genuine smile.

"Alright, I'll talk to him on Monday."



Bad's breathing was coming out heavy by the time he reached the main entrance of the high school where he assumed, and hoped, Skeppy and the others had gone. He didn't even know why he followed them, he just saw Skeppy leaving the stadium for a reason he did not know and ran after him on impulse.

"Where are you, you little muffin heads," Bad muttered under his breath, though the whisper sounded much louder in the empty corridors of the school. He knew Skeppy was probably going to tease him for going after him or call him clingy, but Bad's stubbornness and growing curiosity was enough to push him to continue walking.

There was a crash somewhere to his left, making an involuntary squeak escape him as he jumped midway into the air. Laughter followed, the noise bouncing off the walls as Bad took off in the direction of the noise.

He arrived at the boy's restroom and after a moments hesitation swung the door open.

"Holy shit!" Skeppy shrieked, instinctively covering his body with his football jersey. Bad felt his mouth slack open, his eyes practically bugging out of his skull at the sight before him.

Skeppy, Callahan, Sapnap and Sam were spread out in the small space of the restroom, most of them in the middle of changing out of their Football gear, their helmets and jerseys sprawled out on the tiled floor. In their place, each of them were wearing-

"Are you wearing cheerleader uniforms?!" Bad squeaked, covering his face as it heated up in embarrassment, preventing him from seeing the way Skeppy's face flushed a deep scarlet.

"Bad?! Wh-what are you doing here?!" Skeppy stammered out, attempting to pull his skirt down.

"I told you we should've gone to the locker rooms, but you guys didn't listen to me," Sapnap quipped with a sigh, looking unaffected by the whole ordeal and leaning on the sink with his arms crossed. Callahan stood a few ways back, spinning in a lazy circle and watching his own skirt flutter in amazement.

"The rest of the team might have gone to the locker room, though, and it would have ruined the surprise," Sam pointed out, rubbing his neck nervously as his other hand played with the hem of his skirt. Sapnap muttered an "I guess" in response but didn't seem entirely convinced.

"If you're getting embarrassed about this in front of a single person, Skeppy, then I pray for how you're going to deal with a whole audience," a monotone voice within one of the stalls spoke up. Bad dropped his hands from his face a bit as the stall door swung open, nearly smacking into Sam who backed away from it in surprise. "Oops. Sorry, Sam."

"Techno?!?" Bad's voice sounded borderline hysterical as he gawked at Technoblade, out of all people, in a crop top and skirt.



"Hellooo," he responded with a curt wave, his expression looking bored.

"Skeppy, what is this all about??" Bad turned back to Skeppy, who was looking everywhere but at Bad. "Why are all of you guys in skirts??"

"It was a dare, technically," Skeppy admitted sheepishly, staring at the tile floor as if it had just spoken to him. "If the team won the first game of the season, we were going to dress up as cheerleaders and put on a show for everybody in celebration."

"What kind of dare is that?!" Bad shrieked. Skeppy shot a look at Sapnap, gesturing wildly at Bad as he did so, huffing, "See? See what I mean?"

Sapnap moved away from the sink, picking up his discarded jersey off the floor, along with everybody else's, shrugging. "It was Clay's idea."

"Who, by the way, isn't even here! He made the dare, and he promised he would do it with us, but now he gets to back out of it? That's, like, so unfair! How come he can back out of it and not me??" Skeppy complained, flailing his hands around in exasperation.

"We've been over this, Clay sprained his ankle and proceeded to throw up his lunch and was sent home! Maybe try puking your guts out first and then we'll talk," Sapnap shot back, making Skeppy fix a heated glare in his direction and mutter a "Well maybe he did it on purpose."

"Guys, c'mon, lets not fight about this. I'm sure it'll be fun!" Sam attempted weakly, Callahan shooting two thumbs up in support as Sam smiled at him in thanks. Skeppy let out a groan as Bad's eyes furrowed.

"So you guys are the 'special guests'? You'll be performing with the cheerleading team?" Bad asked, remembering the announcement that had been made back at the stadium.

"Indeed," Techno deadpanned, before walking past Bad and pushing the restroom door open. "Cmon everyone, we have a promise to fulfill and an audience to entertain."

"I like your spirit, Technoblade," Sapnap grinned as he left the jerseys on the counter next to the sink and walked after him. Callahan wordlessly followed suit, pulling Sam along with him, leaving Bad and Skeppy alone as the restroom door swung shut.

Bad turned towards Skeppy, who was still refusing to meet his eye. "Skeppy, you know you don't have to do this if you don't want to. Nobody can force you."

"I know," Skeppy sighed, slowly exiting the restroom and following the rest of the group at a slower pace, Bad falling in step with him. "I keep complaining, but I will feel crappy if I don't do it with them. I agreed to the dare, after all."

The two continued walking in silence, Bad shifting uneasily at the sudden awkward air between them. He wanted to say something, give his best friends words of encouragement, but he didn't know how.

As the two walked back out of the building, the fresh air hitting their faces, the rest of the boys already a good way ahead of them, Bad finally spoke up.

"Listen, Skeppy. I can tell you're nervous about this- AH, AH, don't try and deny it because I know you, okay?"

"Okay okay, sorryyy," Skeppy drawled with his hands raised in surrender, making an involuntary

smile begin to crack through Bad's attempt of a serious expression.

"Thank you," Bad finally grinned, before clearing his throat and continuing. "And okay, you probably think you look dumb or something and that's why you're having these doubts so if I tell you this you have to promise you won't ever bring it up or tease me about it, okay? I'm only saying it because I want you to feel better."

"Fine Bad, I promise I won't tease you for whatever your going to say, even if I ever want to really badly. You have my word."

The two were nearly at the stadium where the rest of the guys dressed as cheerleaders were waiting for them, but Bad timidly grabbed onto Skeppy's wrist and pulled him to a stop. Skeppy looked up at him in surprise as Bad felt his cheeks flush. He prayed it was dark enough that Skeppy couldn't tell.

"You...y-you look good. I-In a uh, a skirt," Bad stammered, staring at the concrete beneath their feet and wishing it could open up and swallow him whole. "S-So don't worry about looking dumb because you look really, really great, a-actually."

A silence stretched between them, the distant sound of the chattering of the crowd still waiting in the stadium and the music being blasted out of the speakers the only thing filling the heavy air between them. Bad timidly turned his attention back up to Skeppy to take in his raised brows, wide eyes and pursed mouth, his face suspiciously flushed a shade darker.

"Do you mean it?" Skeppy practically breathed out, and at Bad's timid nod his face broke out in a wide grin as he threw himself into Bad's arms. "AWEEEE BADDDEDD!"

"Skeppy get off, you need to go now!" Bad yelped as he pulled himself out of Skeppy's grip, ignoring the heat pooling in his cheeks. He was relieved to see Skeppy smirk up at him, all of the tension that had been making him stiff earlier gone and replaced with his usual, annoying self.

"Okay, I know I promised I wouldn't tease you, but-"

"Just go already!" Bad pushed him away, the other cackling loudly as he began to rush off towards the stadium, a newfound confidence evident in the way he carried himself now despite wearing a crop top and skirt. Skeppy shot a smile back at Bad.

"Hey Bad, keep your eyes on me only, okay?" Skeppy shouted back to him with a wink, snickering when Bad crossed his arms and rolled his eyes at him. As he watched him disappear back into the stadium, he couldn't help the fond smile that broke onto his face.

He knew he wouldn't be able to look at anybody else.



The "special performance" was one everybody would definitely be talking about for the next month at least. Everybody that decided to leave before it would later regret doing so and missing

out on what was hands down one of the most entertaining performances at a football game to date.

The cheerleaders had began a dance routine as the band played a mashup of the current popular pop songs when five members of the football team ran onto the field wearing cheerleading uniforms. They began dancing as in sync as they could manage, the crowd still remaining cheering them on loudly and laughing at the whole spectacle. Compared to the cheerleaders their routine wasn't as impressive, it was mostly the boys just running around doing whatever flips they could manage, Technoblade pulling off the most impressive ones and Sam picking up some of the cheerleaders above his head, or Sapnap, Skeppy and Callahan attempting to dance in sync with the music, but everybody was into it and the stands were shaking from the ruckus everybody was making over it.

By the end of it, the crowd broke off into a deafening cheer as the boys bowed, Sapnap shaking his pom poms in the air proudly, Technoblade looking satisfied with a smile ghosting his lips, Callahan doing a few playful twirls before landing in Sam's arms dramatically, and Skeppy looking the most confident of all, his ear to ear grin bold as he stared directly at the person that helped him get out there in the first place.

Bad gave him one of the biggest smiles ever right back, his eyes never having once left the boy with the spiked up hair in a disarray wearing a cheerleader uniform.



"Hey, is it alright if I could get a picture with you?"

Sapnap looked down at the girl that had come up beside him. She seemed younger, maybe a freshmen and vaguely familiar, probably having seen her at some point in the halls of the school, but he didn't know her.

"Sure," he shrugged anyway, making the girl relax a bit in relief. She got her phone out and turned the camera towards them, coming up next to Sapnap as he leant down a bit to come into frame. He grinned as she took the picture, excitedly turning towards him again.

"Thank you so much! Your performance was great, I couldn't stop laughing- oops, I mean cheering," the girl giggled. "You pull off a skirt really well!"

Sapnap chuckled lightly in response, saying a quick "thank you" back before she dashed off to a group of girls some ways away who began squealing and giggling when she got to them.

"Hello there Mr. Cheerleader, could I have a picture with you as well or do I have to wait in line?"

Sapnap turned towards the voice, feeling his face instantly light up as he looked up to see Karl grinning down at him.

"Karl! Hey," Sapnap grinned widely, making Karl giggle.

"Hey handsome. The girl was right you know, you do pull off a skirt," he wiggled his eyebrows playfully, making a laugh escape Sapnap as he swished his skirt a bit.

"It's not bad. Pretty airy down there, it's nice," Sapnap shrugged, smiling wickedly at the face Karl made. "Are you seduced?"

"Very," Karl played along, one of his hands lightly coming up to the strip of exposed waist and lightly grazing it, making an involuntary shiver travel down Sapnap's spine. "Maybe you should wear a skirt more often."

"Maybe I will," Sapnap's lips quirked upwards as he leaned into Karl the slightest bit, close enough Karl could probably feel Sapnap's breath fanning his face. He dropped his voice. "You would like that huh."

And just like that, the air between them was no longer playful. It wasn't the first time this happened, that something electric suddenly seemed to pass between them, a tension he knew Karl was aware of too but neither had addressed aloud. He could feel himself leaning the slightest bit closer to the other boy, an invisible force drawing him closer, almost impossible to withstand.

Almost.

Because just like every other time, they both pulled back. They smiled at each other, and ignored the butterflies swarming within them.

"I should get going, I have to drive Gogy back home," Karl gestured back where Sapnap noticed George standing near the parking lot with Alex, Bad and Skeppy. Skeppy and Alex seemed to be arguing, the latter gesturing around wildly as usual as Bad stood between them and seemed to be attempting to calm them down. George was standing a bit off to the side, watching the three with clear amusement in his features.

"Yeah dude, go. I'll see you Monday," Sapnap turned back to Karl, jumping slightly at their proximity when he did so. He took a small step back when Karl suddenly grabbed his arm.

"Nuh-uh, I'm not leaving without that picture," Karl grinned devilishly, pulling out his phone and swiping to the camera roll setting. "Get in here, gorgeous."

Sapnap leaned in a bit, only for Karl to tug him closer where he was still holding onto his bicep, bringing the two of them flushly side by side.

Sapnap ignored how perfectly they seemed to slot beside each other, like a puzzle pieces made for the other.

"Smile," Karl whispered as he extended the phone in front of them, moving his hand away from his bicep to squish Sapnap's face. Sapnap let out a laugh in surprise, and just as Karl let go, his hand hovering over the click button, it happened.

Karl turned to the side, leant down, and pressed his lips to Sapnap's cheek.

Click.

Sapnap froze. He stared as the image appeared at the bottom of the screen where the camera roll was. A tiny pixelated image of Sapnap mid laugh, Karl kissing his cheek.

His stomach did several summersaults in the best way possible.

"See you Monday," Karl said, pocketing his phone before immediately taking off in George's direction. Sapnap stood still, watching him go with a dumbfounded expression.

Karl had turned and walked away before he could see Sapnap's face flush red, one of his hands going up to hover over the spot where just a moment prior Karl's lips had been.

And Sapnap didn't get to see the gigantic smile that broke onto Karl's face, a sudden euphoria making a happy giggle escape his mouth as he covered it with his hand.

Both of their hearts soared higher than the infinite expanse of stars surrounding their heads.

## Chapter End Notes

If you're reading this because of the note at the beginning of the chapter, yes, this is an intermission chapter! Basically it's still relevant to the story, but not super plot heavy in any way, and doesn't need to be read to understand the rest of the story (though events in it may be referenced later on, it's not super important to remember if that makes sense). I might make a few more of these just to continue to build on other characters and their relationships here and there, but these in between chapters won't happen often. The next chapter will be right back to the main storyline and where we left off :)

And now, to the rest of this authors note that I already know will be boringly extensive so everyone, feel free to skip!

**HI GUYS!! IM BACK!! I MISSED YOU ALL SO MUCH HOW IS EVERYONE DOING TODAY??**

Sorry for the lack of updates for...several weeks. I was experiencing really bad writer's block and it was stressing me out so I took some time away from the story. I ended up writing this chapter in the last few days to try and push myself out of it, and it worked! My creative juices are flowing once again, and I'm ready to continue writing the next few chapters! I have so much I want to do, you guys are not ready AT ALL.

**ALSO THANK YOU GUYS FOR OVER 16K HITS WHAT THATS!! SO CRAZY!!** All this love and support I came back to also played a HUGE factor in getting me back into the flow of things, so thanks to every single one of you for reading my story and to all of you that have dropped a comment, whether directed at me or just a reaction to the story, you have no idea how much it makes my day. I literally never thought this dumb story I crafted on a whim based off of two Minecraft streamers would get the attention it did. I am thankful for every single one of you, thank you for reading my story and being so patient with me :] ♥

Alright that's enough sappyness, I'll leave the authors note here. If you read all of that, you are so freaking poggers and I love you so much but also why would you do that to yourself (joking...kinda)

ayo yall know the drill ;)

**TAKE BREAKS FROM YOUR PHONE (or any device, computer users aren't safe) !!**

**EAT YOUR MEALS !!**

STAY HYDRATED !!

cause if you guys don't, I will cry

and remember you are loved :]

if you claim you are loved by nobody, then that is such lies! Because I love you so so much dear reader!!

take care everyone ♥

(I'm going mimis now since it's midnight where I'm at, I'll be back to revise and edit the chapter tomorrow)

- Kirbs -

psst...follow me on Twitter and instagram @kirbakiii (three i's) wink wonk

I'm super active on Twitter especially! I yell a lot on there be warned

Come talk to me, I'll always lend an ear no matter what bbs. My left one is practically falling off anyway thanks to Dream and George being gay gay homosexual gay👍 /j

# Chapter 14

## Chapter Summary

thoughts are thunk

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was a Saturday morning, the sunlight coming in through his window to disturb his sleeping. Groggily, Clay began to awake, blinking several times to adjust to the brightness, rubbing at his eye tiredly. He scooted up to a sitting position, stretching his arms above his head as he let out a long yawn.

"Oh, you're awake!" a voice said from the hallway, his door opening slightly as his little sister Drista peered in with a grin. Clay felt himself smile slightly, pulling the covers off of him and shifting to get off of the bed, stretching his legs in the process. He winced as his sprained foot touched the ground, but he bit back the pain.

He hadn't told his family he got injured and came home from the game early.

"Morning," he said in a husky voice as he walked over to the doorway, trying his best to hide his limp. He prayed Drista didn't notice, and he willed himself not to glance down at Drista's own leg. Just because he had gotten used to seeing a prosthetic in its place didn't mean a wave of guilt didn't wash over him every time he saw it.

"Mom is making us breakfast, Colton is already downstairs but Wilbur hasn't woken up yet," Drista informed him. Clay hummed lightly as the two made their way to the kitchen where their mother and little brother were located. His mom was in the middle of making them scrambled eggs, little Colton clinging onto her leg and talking loudly about a worm he found at his preschool the other day.

"Good morning," Clay spoke up, making Colton whip around to face him, a smile lighting up his face.

"Clay!" Colton shrieked too loudly for 9 in the morning, dashing to him and latching onto his brother's leg instead.

The injured one.

Clay let out a strained laugh to cover his grimace, ruffling the little boy's light brown hair as he peered up at him with big, hazel eyes.

Colton was the splitting image of their dad.

"Good morning, Clay," his mom smiled softly at him, Clay feeling himself mirroring the expression. "How was the game last night? Sorry I wasn't awake when you boys came home."

Clay felt his heart ache at the look on his mother's face. His mother was beautiful for her age, but now she looked tired. There were worry lines under her green eyes that were usually bright but for

the past few months looked sullen, and her movements were slower than usual. Clay came up beside her, taking one of the eggs from her hands and getting to work himself.

"Oh, Clay, you don't have to-"

"I want to help, mom," Clay cut her off softly, flashing her an honest smile that made her give in and allow him. "It's okay you weren't awake, the game went well. I'm pretty sure we won."

"Pretty sure? Wouldn't you know since you were literally playing in the game?"

Drista laughed innocently, and Clay had to will himself not to face palm at his own slip up.

"I mean we did. Win. We won," Clay rasped out quickly, mentally praying the other team didn't manage to turn the game around at the last second. Drista jokingly rolled her eyes at him and thankfully didn't question it anymore, turning to Colton to playfully poke at his face, making the younger boy try to bite her finger.

"That's good honey, I'm proud of you," his mom said softly, placing her small hand on his shoulder and squeezing lightly. Clay smiled at her, hoping she couldn't see the guilt that was chewing him up inside on his expression.

He felt terrible lying to his family and keeping his injury a secret from them, but he didn't want to worry his mother more. Besides, it was just a sprained ankle. He had no right to complain about it when his little sister suffered an accident that took her whole leg.

"Oh, hello," Wilbur came up to the kitchen entrance, looking like a walking zombie with his hair in disarray and his white t-shirt and sweatpants slightly crumpled from sleeping. Everybody echoed a greeting back as he made his way to the table a few feet from the kitchen island.

"Would you like some help with the food, Mrs. Block?" Wilbur asked, though his voice was dripping with sleep. Clay couldn't help but smile fondly at the taller boy who at the moment looked like an oversized teddy bear.

"It's alright, Wilbur, Clay is already helping me out," his mom waved him away, moving to the other side of the kitchen island to reach the pantry, getting out some plates and utensils. "It's almost ready, anyhow. And you don't have to call me that, please call me Caroline."

Wilbur hummed a soft "okay" before turning to Clay, his eyes glancing down to his leg. Clay felt his stomach drop.

"Oh, Clay is your le-"

"Wilbur, did you enjoy the game last night? I was so tired last night that I didn't get to ask you what you thought about it after the game ended," Clay cut him off, widening his eyes slightly to try to convey to the Brit to play along. Wilbur looked confused at first, probably thinking that they hadn't stayed till the game ended, but thankfully a look of understanding crossed his face as he understood what Clay was trying to tell him.

"Oh, of course, the game was fun. When you guys made that final touchdown, now that was impressive," Wilbur nodded, and Clay practically deflated in relief at how quickly he went along with him.

"I wish I could've gone to the game," Drista whined, moving to sit down and slouch on one of the chairs. Clay and his mother exchanged a look.

"It was pretty late and I wouldn't have been able to take you, Catherine. Maybe next game," their



mom assured. Drista pouted but didn't complain any further.

The 5 of them gathered around the kitchen table once their food was ready, indulging in light conversation and enjoying their breakfast. It still fascinated Clay how easily Wilbur slipped into living with them, and how he had had his back time and time again.

About half an hour later, Clay's mother had left for work and Clay was in charge of taking care of his siblings at home. He was in the middle of washing the dishes, leaning his weight on his good leg, when Wilbur approached him.

"You haven't told your family about your injury," Wilbur stated more than asked. Clay was glad Colton was in his room upstairs playing legos, and Drista on the other side of the house watching a movie.

"I haven't," Clay finished washing the last plate, placing it to a side before shutting the sink and drying his hands with a towel. "And I don't plan to."

"Why not?" Wilbur asked. He didn't sound like he was judging his decision, but rather was curious about the reason. Clay glanced away from him, furrowing his brows slightly.

"Cause it's just a dumb injury. It's not a big deal, and I don't want them to get worried for nothing."

"Clay, you also threw up."

"And that was for another reason," Clay countered, his mind involuntarily flashing to his ex-girlfriend Sam and what he overheard at the high school. The memory on its own was enough for annoyance to begin bubbling inside of him. "Besides, I'm feeling fine now. So drop it."

"Okay, I'm sorry," Wilbur backed up a bit, and instantly Clay felt guilty for snapping, all of the negative emotions seeping out of him as he sighed heavily.

"Sorry, Wilbur. I would just prefer if they didn't know, so please don't mention it to them."

"I understand. And I won't," Wilbur smiled at him reassuringly, Clay reflecting it. And more softly, he added, "Is it because of your sister?"

Clay took a step back like Wilbur had just slapped him, the question one he hadn't expected. But Wilbur was a smart guy, he shouldn't have assumed he wouldn't figure it out.

"You don't have to talk about it, don't worry. But I can see the way you look at your sister's, well..." Wilbur gestured to the general direction of where Drista had left the kitchen, and Clay knew what he meant. "I don't know what happened to her, or what the story there is, but you always seem guilty when you look at it. As if you're blaming yourself it's there in the first place."

Clay remained quiet, pursing his lips into a thin line as he stared at the counter beside the sink. Wilbur was so spot on that he didn't know how to even begin attempting to rebuke his statement. His silence was enough confirmation to Wilbur that he had gotten it right, anyway.

"Whatever it is, I'm sure nobody blames you for it. And your sister loves you, and she looks up to you, I can see that clear as day. Catherine, or what is it you call her? Drista?" Wilbur laughed lightly, the sound making a corner of Clay's lips tug upwards. "I'm positive she doesn't blame you for it, either."

Clay remained silent, not knowing where to even begin to make sense of everything that was

spiraling in his head at that moment, and much less put it into words. Thankfully he didn't have to say anything, because Wilbur lightly patted his shoulder with an encouraging smile and walked off in the direction of the stairs.



"Wakey wakey!" Karl jumped on George's bed, practically sending the smaller boy bouncing off of it. He fumbled in his blankets, his hair an absolute mess as he wiped at a streak of drool at the corner of his mouth.

"What the hell is wrong with you, Karl," George groaned, turning to get comfortable back under his covers only for Karl to flip him around again. "Let me sleep!"

"No, Georgie, it's already 12 o'clock in the afternoon!"

"It's a Saturday!"

"GET OUT OF BED!!"

Karl practically shoved George out of his covers, sending him flailing to the side as he attempted to latch onto anything he could, but to no avail. The Brit practically flopped onto the ground beside his bed with a thud, effectively taking out the remaining drowsiness out of him.

"WHAT THE HELL."

"Breakfast has been ready for over an hour, come and eat!" Karl sing-songed as he dashed out of their shared room. George watched him go with a glare, but his irritation didn't last long as he sighed and fondly shook his head at him.

He might as well get ready for the day now.

Just as George was beginning to get up, he spotted something slightly sticking out from under his bed. He leaned down and grabbed it, his eyes widening at what he was holding.

It was a pair of white, clout goggles.

His mind flashed back to the party a few days prior, to "Magic in the Hamptons" blasting out of the speakers, to the crowd of bodies surrounding him and dancing along to the song.

To the boy that had been in front of him, taking off the clout goggles from his own head and placing them on George's head, all while singing along to the lyrics.

He thought of how much fun he had that day, how he had let loose and danced along with him despite not knowing how to.

How big Clay had been smiling at him. His laughter flowing out of him, the sound of it like a melody of its own.

The feeling of Clay's hand in his as he spun him in a circle before pulling him to his chest, his other arm looping around the small of George's back and dipping him backwards.

The feeling of Clay's cool finger hooking under his chin and tilting his head upwards, the closeness allowing George to see the dusting of freckles over the bridge of his nose, like a million, tiny stars in the darkest of night skies.

George didn't even realize he was grinning stupidly until he glanced at his reflection on Clay's clout goggles.

His smile dropped as he suddenly became too aware of the fluttery feeling in his stomach, of the way his heart was quickening in his chest, its insistent pounding deafening in his ears.

What the hell?

"Hey Gogmeister, are you coming yet?" Karl appeared at the doorway once more, raising his eyebrows when he spotted the goggles George was now clutching a little too tightly. "What's that?"

"Uh, it's Clay's clout goggles. I found them under my bed," George croaked out, clearing his throat a little too loudly. Karl's eyes widened the slightest bit, and George felt his face flush at the implications. He rushed to explain, "He lent them to me. During the party. I just, uh, forgot to give them back, I guess. And they must have fallen at some point. Clay never entered this room."

Karl raised a brow at him. "Are you sure about that?"

"Sure about what," George echoed in confusion. Karl seemed to remember himself and straighten up, waving him off with a "nothing, never mind" before leaving down the hall again. George stared at the empty doorway, his mind replaying their conversation to attempt to decipher what he meant.

"Clay never entered this room."

"Are you sure about that?"

He screwed his eyes shut, racking his brain in an attempt to recall a moment in which Clay may have been in the room. He groaned in frustration, carding his hand through his hair only for it to flip back into place.

He hated that he couldn't remember a good chunk of that night and that no matter how hard he tried to recall anything, his brain always drew up blank. It was more annoying than trying to remember what you were just about to do, but your brain fails to remind you, making you have that nagging feeling at the back of your head until you recall what it was or forget the fact that you were trying to remember something in the first place.

He also felt as though he had disappointed Clay, somehow, by not remembering. The look on his face when he came to the realization that George had no clue what he was talking about...the thought of it made George's gut churn in guilt.

He sighed heavily as he dropped Clay's clout goggles on the nightstand beside his bed, right next to the pile of clothes Clay had returned to him last night. George stared at it for a second before exiting the room to follow Karl down the stairs.

He would have to return the clout goggles to Clay on Monday, and then get to the bottom of what happened at that party once and for all.



"Dude, you should've seen Skeppy. He was super against it at first and seemed seconds away from backing out once and for all, but after he had a little chat with Bad, I don't know, it's like something shifted. Cause after that, he was, dare I say, the most confident one out of all of us, strutting around in that skirt as if he wore it to sleep!"

"Wow, that's amazing," Clay chuckled in response as Sapnap continued excitedly recounting the events of last night.

"Yeah, dude, it was crazy. Even Techno was surprisingly into it. Well- as into it as Techno can be. He mostly seemed bored, but I think even he enjoyed himself. Started preaching something about toxic masculinity and how clothes have no gender when this random guy gave us a dirty look after it ended- it was pretty intense and kind of badass, I think the guy almost peed his pants."

Clay felt a genuine laugh bubble out of him that escalated to a wheeze as he plopped backwards onto his unmade bed, his smile stretching from ear to ear as Sapnap chuckled lightly on the other end of the line.

"Callahan was having loads of fun, he kept twirling in circles because he seemed to like how the skirt did that fluttery thing while spinning. And Sam seemed a little shy at first but I could tell he had fun, too."

"What about you?" Clay spoke up, shifting his phone to his other ear as Sapnap let out a low whistle.

"I looked sexy as hell."

Clay laughed loudly again, rolling his eyes fondly at his best friend. "Whatever you say, Sap."

"I did, okay? You totally missed out, my sex appeal was through the roof. I even got two people asking me to take a selfie with them- one of them was Karl, but it still counts."

"And the other one?"

"This girl, a freshman I think," Sapnap said almost dismissively. Clay whistled teasingly, making Sapnap groan and begin to stammer. "I don't know who she was, but that's not the point. The point is that I definitely seduced a lot of ladies with my little tutu."

"And Karl," Clay teased, and was met with silence on the other end. He had to look at his phone screen to check the call hadn't ended. "Sap? You there?"

"Oh, yeah sorry I'm...I'm here," Sapnap spoke up, but he seemed like he wasn't there, mentally at least, his voice sounding far away. He heard Sapnap clear his throat. "Hey dude, random question."

"Yeah? What's up?"

"Is kissing someone on the cheek considered flirting? Like, not messing around flirting like we do cause we obviously don't mean it, but actual flirting?"

"You don't mean it?" Clay complained jokingly, making Sapnap mutter a "dude, shut the hell up" as Clay let out a wheeze. "I mean, I guess it depends in what context. Like, I can kiss you on the cheek and I won't mean it in that way."

"You wouldn't mean it?" Sapnap mimicked Clay's voice from earlier, making another breathy laugh bubble out of Clay. Sapnap was chuckling as he continued. "I guess I get what you mean, it's just...okay, take this fake scenario-"

"Are you going to do that thing where you say it's a fake scenario or it's your friend's situation when it's actually your own," Clay interrupted. Sapnap huffed in frustration.

"Dude, no, this is just an example, now listen: let's say you're friends with this person, and there has kind of already been some weird tension between the two of you that you don't know what to make of it, but you both kind of just ignore it, if that makes sense?"

Without warning, Clay's mind instantly went to George, perfectly slotting him into the situation Sapnap was describing.

He thought of the night of the party, Clay laying in George's lap in the middle of the woods looking up at the brunette as he raked his hands through Clay's hair.

He thought of George's warm fingers wiping away the trail of tears from his cheeks, his touch so delicate he might as well have imagined it.

He thought of George pulling him into bed with him later that night, the pair close enough that Clay could feel the breath of the other fanning his face and just barely make out a very light splattering of freckles over the bridge of his nose and on one of his cheeks, something he hadn't noticed before.

He thought of George's hand lightly brushing over one of Clay's cheeks, trailing it over the bridge of his nose to the other one, a fascinated look in his chocolate eyes as he openly stared at the blond's freckles.

Clay felt his face warm uncomfortably. "Sure. I think I get what you mean."

"Okay, and so since neither of you has brought it up, it's just kind of sitting there at the back of your mind, and sometimes it makes you overly aware of certain things you do with the person that might not even be that big of a deal to them, but for some reason to you, it seems to be."

Clay thought of how after the party, he suddenly started getting nervous around George for no reason at all. How he was overly aware of every action the boy did in his proximity, no matter how small, and began overthinking even the shortest of interactions with him, out of seemingly no where.

"Uh huh," Clay stammered out, hearing his own heart pounding loudly in his ears as he swallowed past his dry throat.

"And then let's just say- this person pulls something like, uh, kissing your, um, cheek. And out of like, nowhere," Sapnap stuttered on his end, and Clay had to drape his arm over his face to cover how red it was becoming, trying so hard to not to picture George in that type of scenario.

He failed, of course.

His mind was already imagining how George's mouth would feel pressing onto Clay's cheek. It would feel soft, he was sure, the kiss so light it would leave his stomach fluttering for days. He

would move on from his cheek to press his lips to his forehead, and then maybe the tip of his nose, and then move lower to press his lips to his m-

"FUCK!" Clay shouted suddenly, jumping up to a sitting position as he dragged his hand down his burning face, trying to hide his shaky breathing. The call fell silent.

"...dude, you okay?"

"Sorry, yeah, I'm fine," Clay replied quickly, racking his brain for an excuse before his eyes landed on his injured foot. "I, uh, hit my ankle against the side of my bed."

"Ouch, dude, the sprained one?" Clay could practically hear him wince on the other end, his voice obviously concerned, and he felt guilt prick at him for lying. "You have to be careful, we wouldn't want your injury to escalate into something worse."

Clay hadn't even considered that his sprained ankle could worsen, but he hummed in acknowledgment.

Sapnap sighed. "So yeah, where was I? Oh, right, so they kiss you on the cheek out of nowhere, and then just run off. How would you react to that? What does it even mean?"

"I think it means the person likes you. It would make sense, wouldn't it? Nobody thinks about kissing someone if they think of them in a platonic sense," Clay responded carefully, ignoring how saying it made him feel like a hypocrite. "Especially if they actually, you know, go through with it and then just run off."

"I guess," Sapnap responded softly, sounding lost in thought as he considered Clay's words. Clay could hear shifting in the other end before he spoke up again. "So what do I do now?"

"Not your own situation, huh," Clay chuckled, and began wheezing as the mic of his phone peaked with Sapnap yelling profanities at him. Clay finally calmed down enough to ask, "Well, do you like this person like that?"

Sapnap finally fell silent, a few seconds going by without either of them saying anything. There was a shaky sigh, and then he spoke up.

"I think I do."

Clay felt himself grinning. He had not a single clue to what girl Sapnap was referring to, but he would support him no matter who it was.

"Then what're you waiting for?" Clay teased, and Sapnap let out a strained laugh that made his brows furrow. "Sap? What is it?"

"It's just...admitting it out loud is making it finally feel...real. Now that I've said it, it's like I can't go back to pretending I don't feel that way and it's-" Sapnap let out another strained laugh. "It's scary."

Clay flopped back onto his bed, staring at the ceiling above his head.

"Hey, Sap?" Clay muttered.

"Yeah?"

Clay fell silent, shutting his eyes tightly as the image of a boy with chocolate brown hair cut a little

too shortly and equally dark, brown eyes appeared in his mind. He thought of his teasing smile, of his laugh that he enjoyed listening to so much. Of the way he said his name, like he was someone worth being called out to.

Clay let out a shaky breath and braced himself.

"I like George," he whispered the words, testing out the way they fell out of his mouth and filled the silence of his room. The way the admission made him feel. In a slightly louder, more sure voice, he repeated them. "I like George. In that way. I really, really like him, Sap."

The call was silent, and for a second Clay felt his heart stutter in panic when Sapnap finally spoke up.

"I'm glad you told me," he said, and Clay could hear the smile in his voice as Clay exhaled in relief. "Is this the first time you admit it out loud?"

"It's the first time I admit it at all," Clay responded honestly, smiling up at the ceiling. "I hadn't even admitted it to myself, really. Like I knew, but I didn't want to even think about it, you know?"

"Sure," Sapnap responded unconvinced, making Clay rolled his eyes as the other let out a small laugh. "Kidding, I know what you mean."

"Yeah," Clay sighed, and the two fell into a comfortable silence. Clay eventually spoke up again. "What about you?"

"What about me?"

"Who's the girl?"

Clay heard Sapnap suck in a sharp breath. There was a moment of silence, before he quietly admitted, "It's not a girl."

"Oh," Clay said in surprise, his eyes widening. "Well-"

"It's Karl."

"KARL?!" Clay blurted out, shooting up from his laying position, effectively caught off guard. Clay could hear Sapnap fall into a string of laughter as Clay struggled to speak. "Sorry it's just, you really just- admitted that, okay. I didn't- I didn't see that coming, if I'm being honest, like I knew you two always flirted but I never thought any of it was serious and that admission was just- it was like back to back it surprised me-"

"Yeah, I'm surprised with myself that I just admitted that out loud," Sapnap laughed, but he sounded as if a weight had been lifted off his shoulders. "And I lied before, the fake scenario happened yesterday at the end of the game."

"That part I'm not surprised about," Clay chuckled, and he could imagine Sapnap rolling his eyes at him. "Dude that's- that's great. Karl is a really great guy."

"He is," Sapnap agreed almost wistfully, making Clay grin. "I guess we both took 'bros before hoes' a little too seriously."

Clay burst into laughter that fell into wheezes, and soon Sapnap was laughing along with him, the two of them giddy with the admissions they finally said out loud. Eventually they calmed down again, but Clay could imagine Sapnap was still smiling from ear to ear, just as he was now.

"Okay, well, that was great bonding time and all but I need to go and make myself some food. I forgot to eat breakfast and my stomach is starting to speak to me."

"Skipping breakfast, I'm disappointed in you," Clay joked.

"Yeah yeah, don't worry, I'll eat right now, mom," Sapnap huffed, Clay laughing softly in response. "I'll get going now. Talk to you later."

"Later, weirdo," Clay grinned fondly before tapping the end call button, the silence afterward immediately filling his room.

He had finally said it.

He had finally admitted what he had been too scared to even think about for the past few days.

And out loud, no less.

Sapnap had been right. The admission made it feel all the more real, and he knew he wouldn't be able to chalk up his feelings as anything else any longer.

Clay liked George.

His face heated up as an involuntary smile broke onto his face, flopping back down onto his bed and hugging his pillow tightly as he squirmed around like a lovesick school girl.

"George, George, George, George," Clay sang to himself over and over, rolling around on his bed and getting tangled up in his own bedsheets.

"Dear georgenotfound, it appears I have grown a strong fondness towards you. Please do me the honor of marrying me as soon as this Monday," Clay typed away at the empty air above him, pretending to send the brunette an email. He giggled at his own dumb joke. "Yours truly, Dream. Who is actually Clay! Surprise! Marry me."

He felt himself get flustered at his own words, covering his burning face with his two hand.

"Georgeeee, what have you done to meeeee," he complained to his ceiling. He shifted to reach for his phone that had fallen off his bed in the midst of his scrambling, opening it up to Spotify. He put his liked songs on shuffle, the first beats of the song playing loudly out of his phone's speaker.

He read the name of it and felt his face flush again.

Sleeping With a Friend by Neon Trees.

He quickly skipped the song, his heart stuttering. He didn't even want to begin entertaining thoughts of that nature. He would probably develop several heart problems.

The next song started playing.

Boyfriend by Big Time Rush.

He nearly dropped his phone as he scrambled to skip it as well, his face flushing a darker red, if that was even possible.

The next song that played was something Clay could manage to get through without possible heart failure.



Treasure by Bruno Mars.

"Baby squirrel, you's a sexy mother-fucker," a monotone, robotic sounding voice said, and Clay couldn't help but burst out into wheezes at imagining saying such a line to George.

As Bruno Mars began singing, Clay shifted up to a sitting position, singing along with the song and drumming the air to the beat of it (and maybe also thinking about George). As the song began nearing the chorus, he jumped off his bed just as it reached it.

"Treasure! Oh shit, ouch-" Clay crumpled to the ground beside his bed, a surge of pain shooting from his ankle up his whole leg. He clutched at his throbbing foot, wincing painfully.

In the midst of his high, he had forgotten about his sprained foot and proceeded to stupidly jump off his bed which had, of course, hurt very badly.

He felt as if somebody had just dumped freezing cold water over his head, or yanked him down from cloud 9 and forced him back into reality.

His aching foot brought him back to the game on Friday, to the conversation he had with Sam as she tended to it, to finding out George did not remember anything Clay had told him that night at the party, what he overheard about his ex-girlfriend and how she had been cheating on him.

He suddenly felt light headed, leaning his head onto the bed behind him as he tried to even his breathing. His heart throbbed painfully at the reminder of everything that went down, and how awkward it had been between him and George before he left the game.

He had opened up completely to George and though he knows it wasn't his fault he had forgotten all of it, he had been under the influence when he told him, it still hurt. He didn't blame him at all, but he didn't know how he was going to be able to go back to knowing nobody knows the depth of his worries except himself.

He straightened his back, turning to grab his phone that was still on his bed. He clicked pause on Spotify and switched over to his contacts, typing in an "al" in the search bar. The name he was looking for popped up, and he clicked on the contact, staring at the little call button.

He had been bottling up everything that had happened for so long that finally talking about the accident, his worries, his failed relationship and everything else out loud to George had been like a dam was burst in two, all of the water rushing out with nothing to stop it.

When he found out George didn't remember any of it, it was like a group of amateur workers had gotten to work and attempted to fix that broken dam and stop the flow of water.

But the damage had been done.

There were cracks, and at any moment the water would be too much to withhold.

He couldn't just go back to holding it in and dealing with it himself any longer. He knew he needed to talk to someone about it, even if it wasn't George. And he was finally ready.

It was time to finally reach out to his friends.

He called the person, bringing his phone up to his ear as it rung for several seconds. Clay bit his lip nervously, nearly flinching when the call went through and the person picked up.

"Hello? Clay?" a soft voice sounded from his phone's speaker. Clay felt himself grin.

"Hey Alyssa, are you free right now?"



George checked his email after finishing breakfast to find no response from Dream.

He furrowed his brow and refreshed the page multiple times, but still no response. He sighed and closed his laptop.

They were probably just busy anyway.

## Chapter End Notes

HEY HEY HEY EVERYBODY, BACK TO BACK UPDATE?? LETS GO?????

Dudes I literally speedran this chapter today are you guys proud of me >:] that also means I have to go back and revise it later rip

I can't promise every new chapter will come this fast though so hope you enjoyed this quick update! I actually loved writing it, my favorite part was writing the phone call between Sapnap and Dream because I adore those two idiots

But let's go bb Dream is becoming self aware! We're getting somewhere!!! And as for George...he's still a little lost but he's got the spirit

Funny story, the songs Dream played on shuffle got chosen by putting one of my own Spotify playlists on shuffle and the first three songs that played worked out great LMAO so that was pretty cool

I always end up rambling and making these author notes longer than necessary so I'll end this here, remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated! Hearts in chat for all of u!!

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 15

## Chapter Summary

Clay and Alyssa talk while George remembers something from the party.

## Chapter Notes

there are supposed to be images in the text convos between Minx and George but for some reason they're not showing up, I'm trying to get that fixed but for now if you want to see the images you'll have to see them through the Wattpad version

here's the link:

[https://www.wattpad.com/1027962732?](https://www.wattpad.com/1027962732?utm_source=ios&utm_medium=link&utm_content=share_reading&wp_page=reading_part_end&w)

[utm\\_source=ios&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_content=share\\_reading&wp\\_page=reading\\_part\\_end&w](https://www.wattpad.com/1027962732?utm_source=ios&utm_medium=link&utm_content=share_reading&wp_page=reading_part_end&w)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"I'll meet you there then?"

"Oh no it's okay, I can drive us there! You don't have to walk."

"But-" Clay began to protest, but was cut off by Alyssa's stern voice.

"I'm going to go pick you up, okay? I saw that injury you got at the game. You need to rest your foot. Besides, I was already driving around before you called me."

"Fine," Clay gave in, and he could hear the smile in Alyssa's voice.

"Alright. See you in a second, I'm almost at your street."

Clay ended the call and got up from the floor, half limping to the closet to get a set of clean clothes. He changed into his favorite green hoodie and some jeans, leaning on his bed to put on his black, Nike tennis shoes despite the pain that shot through his foot while doing so. He grimaced, but ignored it.

Once he was ready he moved out of his bedroom and began making his way down the hall, noticing that Wilbur's door was ajar. He peeked in to find Wilbur sitting on his bed with his guitar in hand, playing a few notes and humming a melody before writing something down in a notepad beside him.

Clay lightly knocked on the open door, making Wilbur flick his gaze up at him.

"Hey. I'm going out for a bit with a friend, she's coming by to pick me up. Sorry to ask this of you but could you watch my siblings for me? I don't think I'll be gone for too long," Clay shifted a bit in the doorway, fiddling with his fingers as he waited to see his reaction. Wilbur gave him a smile and he felt himself relax.

"Sure man, don't worry about them. I've been told I'm a very good babysitter," Wilbur lifted his chin a bit proudly, Clay grinning back at him.

"Great. Thank you so much," Clay sighed in relief as he began turning to walk away.

"Wait, Clay."

Clay turned back towards Wilbur. "What's up?"

"You know this bedroom is next to yours, right?" Wilbur said slowly. At Clay's confused look he sighed and added, "The walls are practically paper thin."

Clay blinked at him for a few seconds before realization dawned on him, instantly feeling his face heat up as his mouth slacked open. "You mean you heard-"

"Everything," Wilbur finished his sentence with an amused nod. "Yup."

"Oh god," Clay whispered, covering his red face with his two hands in shame. "This is so embarrassing."

"I found it pretty amusing, especially the part where you wrote a love letter of sorts asking for George's hand in marriage-"

"Please stop talking," Clay cut him off quickly as Wilbur burst out laughing at his flustered state.

"Or- or the part where you were saying George's name like 50 times-"

"I only said it like, 5 times," Clay grumbled, dragging a hand down his face tiredly. Wilbur was clearly finding the whole situation incredibly amusing, setting his guitar down beside him as he threw his head back in laughter.

"You have no idea how hard it was to not burst out laughing while listening to that," Wilbur chuckled lightly once he had calmed down a bit. Clay bit his lip as he turned his gaze to the floor.

"Are you going to tell him?"

Wilbur's smile dropped as he looked at Clay in confusion. "What? No, of course not."

"But he's your friend," Clay countered weakly, leaning his weight against the doorframe. He looked back up to see Wilbur staring at him intently.

"Clay, I won't tell George. Yes he's my friend, but it's not my place to tell him your feelings towards him. You're my friend too, and I wouldn't betray your trust like that, much less out you to anybody. Only shitty people do that." Wilbur's face softened a bit. "You will tell him when you're ready, but if you never do? That's okay too. I'm more than happy to take this secret to my grave."

"Now that's a little dramatic," Clay laughed lightly, Wilbur rolling his eyes at him but smiling nonetheless.

"Point is, I swear to you won't tell anyone. Even George."

Clay smiled softly at the taller male. "Thank you Wilbur."

"Don't thank me, it's just basic human decency," Wilbur shrugged him off, but he was grinning fondly back at the blond boy. "And good luck with that one. He's never been in a relationship before, or at least that I know of."

Clay felt his cheeks warm. "I never said I wanted to be in a relationship with him."

"Oh right, you wanted to skip straight to marriage. I forgot you're a speed runner," Wilbur teased as Clay let out a huff of annoyance, making the other laugh lightly. "I've been holding you for too long, go away now. Shoo shoo."

"How thoughtful of you," Clay drawled sarcastically, but he returned the smile. He waved at Wilbur before making his way down the hall and to the stairs, going down them two at a time. He felt his phone buzz in his pocket from an incoming call.

"Hey," he picked up.

"I'm outside your house," Alyssa responded in the other end.

"I'll be out in a second."



George was lying on his side on his bed, staring at nothing in particular. He didn't have homework over the weekend and he didn't have anything to do, so after checking his email several times and staring at passed already opened ones, he had given up and set his laptop aside. Flopping down on his bed and doing absolutely nothing seemed like a good way to spend his Saturday anyway.

His eyes fluttered closed as his breathing began to slow, feeling himself begin to succumb to the grips of a light slumber when the back of his mind reminded him of his brief conversation with Karl earlier.

"Clay never entered this room."

"Are you sure about that?"

His eyes flew back open as he snorted. Maybe it was his drowsy mind, in between awareness and unconsciousness, but now that he rethought of that line, he couldn't help but hear John Cena saying the phrase instead of Karl. He let out a soft laugh.

He could no longer take the statement seriously. Thanks, brain.

But something about the way Karl had looked saying it, as if he knew something George didn't. As if he knew for a fact that Clay had been in this room that night.

He still wondered if it was something he had forgotten. And if he had, and Clay had really been in this room, was it with him? What had they been doing? Or was it something unrelated with him entirely?

He groaned in frustration as his own mind started coming up with weird scenarios and implications. He quickly discarded each of them, ignoring the heat that rose to his cheeks at the mere thought.

George was starting to feel himself slip back into sleep when he suddenly shifted his hand upwards, reaching out as if to poke at the empty air beside him without much thought behind the action.

"Dots," he heard himself murmur. Except he hadn't spoken, he knew that, but his voice echoed in his mind all the same.

He heard a soft laugh, like the delicate chime of bells.

"They're freckles, George," a voice responded. A familiar one.

Behind the darkness of his shut eyes, he saw himself reach forward to poke on the powdering of freckles atop smooth, ivory skin.

"So many," he whispered, his mouth moving as he heard it, this time.

His eyes flashed open. He immediately sat upright on his bed, staring down at the empty space beside him as his mind began to race.

Had that been a memory just now?

George scrambled to try to grip onto what he had just seen a second prior, half asleep but not yet dreaming.

He had been in bed, lying on his side, and right there laying right beside him had been...

"Clay," George whispered at the spot where he had been the night of the party, as if saying his name out loud would materialize him into existence.

Why had he been in bed with Clay??

"Think, George, think," he muttered to himself, dropping his head into his hands as he attempted to rack his brain for any other memory, or for context at the very least, but once again he came up blank.

"KARL!" George shouted suddenly, and he heard the pattering of quick footsteps bounding down the hall before Karl appeared at his doorway.

"Georgie, what is it?" Karl said quickly, looking around the room as if he would spot an intruder or a giant, human-eating spider. But when he took a glance at George's face, his eyebrows furrowed. "Why is your face all red?"

"Why were Clay and I in bed together the night of the party?" George asked in one breath, feeling his face grow warmer as his mind scrambled to come up with its own explanation. Karl's eyes widened slightly.

"Oh, you remembered?"

"No, well kind of. I only remembered like two seconds of us in bed and now my brain is trying to fill in the blanks and it's kind of freaking me out!"

Karl hesitated a second in the doorway before walking into the room, sitting down on the corner of George's bed.

"Ok, well, I brought Sapnap back to this room because he was drunk out of his mind and couldn't drive home, but the door to the bedroom was locked."

"Locked?!" George yelled, unable to stop his mind from coming up with a million reasons why they would lock the door.

"No, no, George, listen to me. I unlocked the door with a bobby pin, and you two were lying in bed together. But it's okay! You guys were just cuddling-"

"THAT DOESN'T MAKE THE SITUATION BETTER, KARL," George's voice raised in borderline hysteria as he hid his face in a pillow he had at some point began clutching to his chest. He could feel his face burning.

"Nothing happened, George, all right? The two of you had just changed clothes and fallen asleep together-"

"Oh my god, that's right!" George remembered waking up the next morning in a fresh set of clothes, and it explained why Clay had given him the hoodie and pants he had borrowed last night at the game. George felt the color drain from his face. "Oh my god."

"What? What is it, did you remember something else?"

George turned to look at Karl, his intense gaze practically burning holes in the other's eyes. He opened his mouth to respond, but no words came out. He tried again. "Did...did Clay and I...?"

Karl tilted his head in confusion. George lowered his voice to practically a whisper.

"Did we...you know..." George trailed off, his face still a bright red as he made a thrusting motion with his hands.

"My god, George, you did not just do that-"

"Did we?? Did we, Karl????"

"No, of course not-"

"We were both in a change of clothes, you found us together in bed cuddling, we locked the door?????" George was beginning to sound hysterical, counting off every reason to flip out. "How can you be sure-"

"George! Listen to me!" Karl grabbed onto both of his shoulders roughly, making George look at him with wide eyes. "You two didn't sleep together, okay? Well, you slept in the same bed, but you two didn't- you get what I mean."

"But-"

"No buts, Clay was sober. He would never take advantage of anybody that's under the influence. He's not an idiot," Karl finished reassuringly. George swallowed roughly before nodding.

"Right. You're right," George agreed, deflating a bit as Karl let go of him. "Sorry for freaking out."

"Hey, it's understandable. If I had been in bed with my crush and not remembered what we did, my imagination would probably run wild, too."

The two fell into a comfortable silence before George jerked his head back up at Karl, realizing what he said.

"Clay is not my crush???" George squeaked in surprise, and he hated that the sentence had come out as a question. Karl gave him a confused look before his mouth dropped open in an 'o' shape.

"He's not? My bad, I thought you liked him for a second," he shrugged it off like it was no big deal, but George could feel his heart rate begin to pick up and his face flush in embarrassment at the misunderstanding.

"What made you think I liked Clay? I'm straight, you know," George insisted. Karl smiled softly at his words, looking down at his feet, his gaze far away.

"I used to say the same thing," he muttered lowly before chuckling, and George cocked his head at him in confusion. He waved him off. "Never mind, you just always seemed uncomfortable talking to girls that approached you at school but I shouldn't have assumed."

"That's because I don't even know them. Besides, I already like someone, who's a girl," George added quickly. Karl looked at him carefully, one of his eyebrows drawing upward.

"You do?"

"Yeah."

Karl seemed to be racking his brain trying to figure out who before his eyes widened in realization. "Wait, Minx? I had been teasing you, but you actually like her?"

"I mean, I don't know her that well but, sure. If I got to know her better I could easily fall for her," George went along with it, not feeling like a liar since technically he was attracted to her, and she always seemed to catch him off guard. First at the party, and then at the football game.

It was kind of exhilarating, and he liked it.

"I don't know how to tell you this, George, but she and Schlatt- you know, the guy with the mutton chops," Karl gestured at the sides of his face. "They've kind of been on and off for years."

"Are they together now?"

"Well, no..."

"Then? I mean, I don't know if it was just me but she was kind of flirting with me at the game," George pointed out. Karl thought about it.

"I guess you are right. She probably does like you."

"You think so?" George grinned excitedly. Karl gave him a look George couldn't decipher before silently nodding in agreement. "Awesome."

"What're you going to do about it?" Karl asked curiously. George fell backwards onto his bed, staring up at the ceiling with a smile.

"I don't know, I guess I could try to start talking to her more, see where it goes."

"Want her number?"

George lurched up to a sitting position, staring at Karl with big eyes.

"You would give it to me?"

"Well, I would ask her if I could give you her number first, of course," Karl added.

"Of course," George nodded, watching as Karl pulled out his phone and opened it, swiping at his



screen before beginning to type. "Wait, right now?"

"Why not?" Karl grinned mischievously at him before turning back down to continue typing, vocalizing his text message. "Hey Minx, was just wondering if I could give George your number since he's being a big baby about it."

"What- no don't say that," George said quickly as he tried to grab hold of Karl's phone, but Karl was faster than him and held it out of arms reach.

"He has a big, mega, ultra huge crush on you by the way," he continued dictating with a light giggle, and George began scrambling to get the other's hand as Karl began outright laughing, his free hand coming up to cover his mouth.

"Karl, don't send that!" George shouted in bewilderment as he threw himself at the other, pinning him down to the bed and snatching the phone out of his hand. He stared at the screen.

Karl [02:19]

hey would it be alright if I gave George ur number?

(Read)

"Karl, she read it!" George dropped the phone, quickly scrambling off of the other. Karl picked it up and looked at the screen.

"Oh yeah, she's typing," he said, and George felt his heart lurch into his throat. A few seconds passed before Karl looked back up at him. "She says sure."

"Let me see," George demanded as he moved to sit beside Karl and peer over his shoulder.

Karl [02:19]

hey would it be alright if I gave George ur number?

Minx my beloved [02:20]

sure :)

"See?" Karl laughed softly, pushing George's face away from his space. "Give me your phone, I'll put in her number."

George did, and Karl input her number into his contacts. He held it back out to him before standing up from his bed, making the bed shift without his weight on it. "Have fun~."

George stuck his tongue out at Karl as he left, turning back down to the new contact on his phone. He put "Minx" as the contact name, tapping on the message icon and staring at their empty conversation. He began typing.

George [3:25]

hey Minx it's George

(Read)

That was fast, George thought. He stared at the little typing icon at the bottom of his screen in anticipation, his heart rate spiking.

George [3:25]

hey Minx it's George

Minx [3:26]

hello george

Minx [3:26]

how come u wanted my #?

George [3:26]

do I need a reason ?

Minx [3:27]

yes

Minx [3:27]

ur reason, hand it over

Minx [3:28]

[image of Pusheen cocking a gun]

George [3:29]

I guess I just wanted to talk to you

Minx [3:29]

simp

George [3:29]

wth

George [3:30]

I'm not

Minx [3:30]

u are lol

George [3:30]

this was a bad idea

George [3:31]

I'm blocking your number

George [3:31]

goodbye

Minx [3:31]

NOOO GEORGEEEE

Minx [3:31]

dont block me ill be sad

George [3:33]

cry about it

Minx [3:34]

GEORGE WTF

George [3:36]

[imagine of an ambulance with the caption “call the wambulance”]

Minx [3:37]

[image of someone flipping the bird]

George [3:39]

[image of Gordon Ramsey with a concerned look]

Minx [3:39]

[image with the caption “I want to nut in this boy so bad but I got a cochie

♀

Minx [3:39]

SHIT SHIT NO WIATA WRONG PICTUER

Minx [3:40]

IGNORE THST PLEASRE

George [3:40]

WHY DO YOU HAVE THAT SAVED IN THE FIRST PLACE

Minx [3:41]

YK WHAT CAN U SHUT UP

George [3:41]

LMAOOOOO

Minx [3:41]

STOP LAUGHING

George [3:42]



Minx [3:42]

IM BLOCKING YOU

George [3:43]



Minx [3:43]

FUCK YOU

George [3:45]

[image of an uwu button with hearts surrounding it]

Minx [3:45]

STOP

Minx [3:46]

I HATE U

George [3:47]

[image of an axolotl smiling with hearts]

Minx [3:48]

ok thats super cute i can't even complain

George [3:48]

it's an axolotl :]

Minx [3:49]

wait I need to google this

Minx [3:52]

theyre adorable little fuckers omg wtf look

Minx [3:52]

[image of an axolotl]

George [3:54]

they are

George [3:54]

[image of an axolotl]

Minx [3:55]

the little open mouth aweeee

Minx [3:55]

theyre so cute what the hell

George [3:56]

they're in Minecraft now too

Minx [3:56]

THEY ARE??

George [3:59]

[image of a Minecraft axolotl]

Minx [4:00]

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH

George and Minx continued texting back and forth, sending random memes and talking about whatever. George found himself laughing at her messages a lot, at how easily she was riled up and how unfiltered the girl was.

A smile stayed on his face the whole time.



"So what did you want to talk about?" Alyssa asked as the two of them made their way to a park bench some ways ahead of them. They were walking in a slow pace because of Alyssa's insistence that he take it easy.

"Well...a lot of stuff actually. I wanted to tell the whole group but I figured it would be easier if I started with you. Besides, you live close by so," Clay explained, kicking at a rock and sending it flying. Alyssa watched him out of the corner of his eye.

"By the whole group, do you mean..?"

"You, Sapnap, Callahan, Bad, Sam and Ponk," Clay responded with a nod. "The original group, until I kind of...distanced myself from all of you."

The two sat down on the park bench, Clay turning to look at Alyssa straight on.

"I'm sorry I did that, you guys weren't at fault and I could say I was in a bad place then because of the accident but that didn't- that would not excuse my actions, and you guys didn't deserve it. I shouldn't have taken it out on all of you."

"Clay, you don't have to apologize-"

"No, but I do, Alyssa! I was a shitty friend, I pushed you all away when all you guys wanted to do was be there for me after it happened. I was an asshole to the group, for weeks, losing my cool for no reason whenever any of you tried to reach out. You guys were only trying to help, and I don't know why I couldn't see that."

Clay dropped his gaze, letting out a shaky breath as he stared at the space between them. Alyssa softly placed her hand over his. He hadn't even realized it was shaking.

"I'm sorry, Alyssa. You tried to be there for me, and I repaid you by telling you off and pushing you away. You didn't deserve that, and I'm so sorry. It was such a shitty thing to do. Even after time passed and I began talking to the others again, I never reached out to you. I'm sorry it took me this long to."

Alyssa let go of his hand and moved forward, wrapping her arms around his shoulders and bringing him in for a hug. Clay only froze for a split second before relaxing into her arms, wrapping his arms around her back and hugging her tightly.

"I'm so, so sorry," he muttered into her shoulder. She could feel her soft laughter against his chest.

"Stop apologizing, dummy. I forgive you. And you're here now, that's what matters."

Clay felt tears begin to well up in his eyes as he let out a wet laugh.

"You're too nice for your own good. You're going to get taken advantage of, one day."

"Don't worry, I'm sure Callahan wouldn't let that happen," Alyssa pulled back, giving him a soft grin. Clay smiled back.

"You two are still together?"

"Yup. Going 8 months strong now," Alyssa smiled proudly.

"That's amazing, Alyssa. I'm happy for both of you!"

"Thanks," Alyssa said, leaning back on the bench and looking up at the sky as a bird flew by. "He makes me happy."

"I can tell, you look happy."



Alyssa's smile turned mischievous, a sudden glint in her eye. "What about you?"

"What about me?" Clay asked, already feeling heat rising on his face.

"Found anybody new you fancy?"

"I, uh...well..."

"Oh my god, you have!" Alyssa gasped excitedly, leaning into Clay's space, her big, blue eyes sparkling. "You have to tell me who! Do I know them?"

"I- Kind of?"

"Give me a hint."

Clay bit his lip nervously, feeling his heart rate begin to speed up. It's okay, he told himself. He had already done this once, he could do it again.

"Well...okay. But this hint is going to give it away right off the bat."

"That's fine!"

Here goes nothing. "You dared this person to down their and Sapnap's full cup the night of the party."

Alyssa stared at him blankly for a few moments until recognition flickered in her expression. "Oh, oh, I had dared the transfer student- his name was George, I believe? And he ended up drinking both cups-" Alyssa cut herself off as it dawned on her. "Clay. You like...George?"

Clay nodded briefly, making Alyssa's grin widen immediately as she jumped forward to hug him again.

"Oh my god, Clay! That's amazing!" she practically shrieked into his ear, Clay flinching slightly at her volume, but a smile immediately bloomed on his face.

"Yeah?"

"Yes, Clay, it is!" she pulled back again, her hands grabbing his shoulders. "I haven't talked to him much but he seems super sweet. Plus, he's really pretty."

"He is, isn't he," Clay laughed lightly, his face probably flushed a deep scarlet. Alyssa was nodding in agreement.

"He is, he is. You have good taste in boys. Awe, you're all red and you're smiling so big!" Alyssa pointed at him with a big smile of her own. Clay absentmindedly moved his hand up to his mouth to cover his big, dopey grin. "This is so cute! You guys are so cute."

"Stop, Alyssa," Clay complained without heat, dropping his head in his hands. His cheeks were beginning to hurt from how wide he was smiling.

"You have to tell me everything! We can talk about boys now, Clay!" Alyssa said excitedly, practically bouncing in her seat. Clay laughed fondly at how thrilled she was over this.

"I keep forgetting you were the only girl in our group then. How did you deal with all the girl talk?"

"It wasn't that bad, I did always give you guys good advice, after all," Alyssa responded. "Plus, I got to spend more time with Callahan as a result of hanging out with the group, so I can't really complain."

"Ugh, affection. Disgusting," Clay joked, letting out a short wheeze as Alyssa lightly punched his shoulder.

"Says you," she quipped.

"Oh, leave me alone."

"No! Not until you tell me about him!"

Clay gave her a look but eventually cracked, a grin slipping back onto his face. "Alright, alright fine."

Beaming, he told her about George.

## Chapter End Notes

Simp.

I actually wrote one huge chapter but I'm splitting it into two, so here's the first half and I'll be uploading the second half later on! :] Back to back updates lets go babyyyyyy

(the next chapter is already posted on Wattpad so if you want to read ahead, here's the link)

[https://www.wattpad.com/1029807361?](https://www.wattpad.com/1029807361?utm_source=ios&utm_medium=link&utm_content=share_reading&wp_page=reading_part_end&w)

[utm\\_source=ios&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_content=share\\_reading&wp\\_page=reading\\_part\\_end&w](https://www.wattpad.com/1029807361?utm_source=ios&utm_medium=link&utm_content=share_reading&wp_page=reading_part_end&w)

Remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated alrighty

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 16

## Chapter Summary

Clay and Alyssa are besties canon (REAL!) (NOT CLICKBAIT!!)

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"So this idiot- he's just whispering! He's whispering in an empty school! And I ask him why he's whispering and he just- he says it feels weird to talk normally, and I'm like okay weirdo."

"Did you really call him a weirdo," Alyssa's mouth quirked upwards.

"Yes yes, I did, to his face. Because like, who whispers in an empty school? Anyway, then he goes," Clay then switched to his best attempt at a British accent. "Clay I will drop you." Alyssa let out a laugh.

"Oh my gosh, did he??"

"No no of course not, but the way he said it was just so funny to me, I don't even know why, I just start laughing so hard. I practically bust a lung, and then he tries to shush me for some reason so naturally, I start laughing harder!" Clay wheezed a bit as he retold the memory, Alyssa softly laughing along as Clay shook his head fondly. "He's actually so dumb."

"What happened after?"

"After, we go into the restroom, right, and then George says and I quote: 'Go in there and do your business, I don't know.'"

"That's such an awkward thing to say," Alyssa giggled, Clay nodding his head as he continued to talk animatedly with his hands.

"Dude- yes, it was such an awkward statement, but I don't know- I thought it was cute? I teased him about it right after, and he got all pouty and told me to shut up. And all my brain could think was how adorable he looked," Clay grinned fondly as he looked down at his swinging legs.

"Awwwww, that's so cute," Alyssa responded. Clay felt his face flush, beginning to get used to the sensation. He laughed lightly.

"Yeah, after that it kind of went down hill, though," Clay said. His legs stilled, replacing the movement with bouncing anxiously in place as Alyssa gave him a curious look.

He told her about how he found out that George didn't remember what happened at the party. And then immediately after that revelation, as they were walking back to the football field, they overheard the conversation between his ex-girlfriend Sam and the guy she had apparently cheated on him with.

"Oh my god Clay, that's terrible. I had no idea," Alyssa said softly. Clay gave her a smile, but he knew it didn't reach his eyes.

"Yeah, it sucks to know that she had been cheating on me then. But I'm glad I know the truth now," Clay shrugged, fiddling with his fingers. "I felt betrayed, but not because I still love her because I moved on long ago, but because I had loved her then and it was during that time she had done that."

"I understand," she nodded as Clay sighed.

"I had felt so guilty this whole time- that she had broken up with me because the accident not only marked me but her in extension. That she felt responsible for it as much as I did because she had been in a call with me when it happened, and that me distancing myself from her had made her feel worse. But this whole time she had just been- waiting. For an opportunity to end it, so she could finally be with the other guy without having to sneak around. And when she got that opportunity, she immediately took it, and I ended up feeling like I had been in the wrong and did her an injustice.."

The two of them fell silent, the distant sound of birds chirping and the breeze rustling the trees around them the only thing filling it. Alyssa spoke up first.

"I think you should talk to her."

"What- who, Sam? She actively cheated on me, there's no excuse for that, and obviously I'm never getting back with her so what would there be to talk about," Clay rebuked. Alyssa gave him a calculating gaze.

"Clay, I think you need to have a conversation with her about it. For closure," she began, continuing before Clay could get a word in. "You didn't date anyone for months after your break up with Sam, and you didn't even allow yourself to explore anything with anyone during that time. Like at the party, when Celestia kissed you? You had looked really out of it after and then left the room, and you told me some moments ago that you went outside to get fresh air because you started having what I'm assuming was a borderline panic attack. What was it that you had told George later on in the woods? About Celestia?"

Clay brought back the memory still engraved in his mind, how he had stared up at George while laying his head on his lap, an infinite night sky expanding above the trees surrounding them. "I told him that if I were in a better mindset, I wouldn't have minded exploring a relationship with Celestia."

"Right, and then you said something about feeling stuck?"

Clay nodded. "Yeah. That I had felt stuck for months and wouldn't commit myself to anyone again, because my mindset at that time was that it wasn't worth it to put in hard work in a relationship that would end just like that."

"Your mindset at that time," Alyssa repeated, her voice softening. "But it's changed, hasn't it? Because of George."

Clay hadn't thought of that. Looking back, he had already changed a lot in a handful of days, ever since that first time he fully opened up to someone about everything that had been clouding his mind for months. And it happened to be that the person he had opened up to was George.

If he went back in time and told his past self that in a matter of days he would finally reach out to his friends and talk to them about everything, he wouldn't have believed it. And yet here he was.

"Tell me, could you imagine yourself in a relationship now? Or if not right this second, in the

near future?" Alyssa asked, pulling him out of his thoughts.

He tried to imagine it. Being in a relationship again. He couldn't even remember what it felt like to be in one now, if he was being honest. It had been so long since he dated Sam, and he tried remembering what it had been like then.

He remembered taking Sam on dates. Going to the movies, playing games at an arcade, walking around the mall, staying at one of their houses to watch Netflix- not any big, flashy dates, but they had been nice. Simple.

Except he also remembered it hadn't been all that simple. Back then, he would look at their time spent together with fondness and bliss, but now that he no longer had those rose colored glasses on, he realized how off everything had been. How difficult it had been to be in that relationship, which is why he had felt he put so much work into it only for it to fall apart in the end.

They used to fight. A lot. He always brushed it off as something normal, because they always forgave each other and continued to love each other after every fight, but looking back at it now he realized it happened way too often. He always felt like an asshole after fighting with her and would be the first to apologize even if a voice in the back of his mind told him he had done nothing wrong. He was always walking on egg shells with her, hoping he wouldn't say the wrong thing at the wrong time and upset her again, because he hated upsetting her. It was suffocating, having to hold back on certain things he enjoyed to do and instead submit to her wishes, if only to please her. He realized quickly how emotionally exhausting it had been dating her.

Dating should be fun, freeing, calming, maybe even reassuring. It shouldn't feel hard, or confusing, or overly complicated. Every relationship has its bumps and bad days, but the point of being in one is to find a way to make it work regardless, and to be there for each other even when it's hard, isn't it? To find their way back to each other, to be each other's shoulder to lean on, to be with the person you trust most and feel most safe around, with the person that makes you happiest.

It should feel like being with your best friend.

It hadn't been like that with Sam. They had their good days, but every relationship does. Unfortunately, the bad ones seemed to outweigh the good with her.

But now, could he imagine himself in an actually healthy relationship?

He imagined himself holding hands with someone, their fingers intertwined, bringing their knuckle up to his mouth to press a chaste kiss on it.

He imagined hugging someone, resting his chin on their hair and swaying them both slightly, the other in their arms hugging back just as tightly, maybe even burrowing their face in his chest.

He imagined laughing with someone, being unable to suppress his own wheezes and nearly falling over from the force of his laugh, the other person laughing just as loudly, their face scrunching up in delight.

He imagined cuddling with someone in bed, holding them close to their chest as their breathing would begin to even out, and they could fall asleep in the security and warmth of each other's arms.

He imagined dancing with someone, maybe in the middle of the rain with no music playing, but doing it with this person just because he could, just so he could hold their hand and bring them close to their chest, just so he could dip them low and make them laugh loudly, because he loved the sound of their laugh.

He imagined the smaller things, too. Cleaning a crumb of food off the corner of this person's mouth. Burying themselves into books together a week before an exam. Offering his umbrella to the person when they forgot theirs, only for them to walk home together under it. Cracking a joke just to see their face light up and to hear the laughter bubble out of them. The feeling of just seeing their smile and it already making their day infinitely better.

He imagined himself in so many different scenarios, and in every single one, he imagined them with George. There was nobody else he could imagine himself doing that with- nobody else he wanted to do all of that with. His heart continued to beat rapidly against his chest, his stomach swarming with butterflies at the mere thought.

"You can, right?" Alyssa gave him a reassuring smile. Clay stared at her for a moment before nodding.

He definitely could.

"And that's great," she started again. "But I can imagine what you found out about Sam is weighing heavily in your mind nonetheless."

"Are you a mind reader or something," Clay laughed a bit but it came out strained, otherwise confirming her words. She gave him a sad smile.

"I think having that closure will really help. You can talk to her, ask her why she did what she did or any other burning question you may have, and you don't even have to forgive her by the end of it. But I think- talking to her about it will finally put you at peace with it, you know?"

"Yeah. Yeah, you're right," Clay agreed, carding his hand through his hair and possibly leaving it a messy disarray atop his head. "It's going to suck, though."

"Nobody said it was going to be easy."

The two fell silent as they watched a pigeon fly down in front of them, landing near their feet, it's head bobbing up and down as it walked by them in a sort of semi-circle. Alyssa leaned towards him a bit and nudged his shoulder softly.

"It could also give you a chance to talk to her about the accident," she said, her voice just above a whisper. Clay sucked in a sharp breath, not turning towards her. She continued. "You also need closure on that, too. It would be a good place to start."

Clay knew she was right. It didn't make hearing it any easier.

"But don't push yourself to talk to her now if you're not ready. Take it at your own pace," Alyssa patted his leg lightly, making Clay look back up at her and flash her a genuine smile.

"Thank you, Alyssa. I appreciate it more than you know. Talking to you has already helped a lot."

"Anytime, Clay," she beamed back. Just then, her phone buzzed a couple of times in her back pocket. She reached back to retrieve it, seemingly reading something off the screen.

"What is it?" Clay asked. Alyssa glanced at him briefly before beginning to type on her phone.

"It's Callahan. He's asking where I am since he wanted to pass by my house in a bit. I'll tell him I'll meet up with him later-"

"Tell him to come here," Clay blurted out, lightly grabbing her wrist to stop her from typing anything. She regarded him carefully, her eyes widening the slightest bit.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes," he nodded, giving her a determined look. She hesitated for a second before turning back to continue typing away at her phone. In the meantime, Clay took his own phone out and opened up his messages, looking for a group chat that had been inactive for months.

Until now.

He quickly typed out a message, his fingers flying over the keyboard at the bottom of his screen. He hesitated over the send button before pressing it, a satisfying whoosh sounding from his phone. He glanced back to see the moment Alyssa got the notification on her phone and her eyes widened even more so, her eyes darting back to his.

"Clay, what...?"

"I need to talk to them too," Clay responded as an explanation. "All of them. I hope they're not busy."

"You're sure?"

Clay had initially done it on impulse, but there was no going back now. It was a good time as any to finally do what he had been avoiding for months. He nodded. "I'm sure."

Alyssa hugged him again, and Clay immediately returned the gesture.

"I'm proud of you, you know," she smiled into his hair. "You're one of the bravest people I know."

"Well, I don't know about that," Clay chuckled, but smiled in thanks as they both pulled back. He could think of several braver people, but he didn't mention it. Both of their phones began vibrating with rapid, incoming messages from the revived group chat.

Clay [3:48]

Hey, I really need to talk to all of you, are you guys free?

Simpnap [3:48]

hey sexy

Goodgirlhalo [3:48]

Language

Callahottie [3:50]

:0

Simpnap [3:52]

sexy isnt language >:(

Goodgirlhalo [3:52]

Language!

Goodgirlhalo [3:52]

Also I'm free owo

Ponkadonk [3:53]

Im free as well

Clay [3:53]

Is Sam active?

Ponkadonk [3:54]

he was a while ago

Awesamdad [3:56]

I'm free :)

Ponkadonk [3:56]

Sam!

Awesamdad [3:56]

Ponk!



Ponkadonk [3:56]

hi :D

Awesamdad [3:57]

hello :)

Clay [3:57]

Can you guys come to the park near me and Alyssa's house

Clay [3:58]

The one we used to go to

Clay [3:58]

Alyssa and I are already here

Awesamdude [3:58]

alright

Goodgirlhalo [3:59]

I'll be there soon!

Ponkadonk [4:00]

me too Ill be there

Callahottie [4:01]

I'm already on my way

Alyssaaa [4:01]

Callahan my beloved😊

Callahottie [4:02]

Alyssa my adored😊😊😊

Alyssaaa [4:02]

omg I'm blushing

Simpnap [4:04]

i feel so single rn

Clay [4:04]

You won't feel that way for long I'm sure ;)

Simpnap [4:05]

CLAY

Simpnap [4:05]

LITERALLY STOP TALKING

Goodgirlhalo [4:05]

o.o

Clay [4:06]

I'm not talking I'm typing

Clay [4:06]

Dummy

Simpnap [4:07]

clay stg when I get there i will jump u

Goodgirlhalo [4:08]

Sapnap that's mean D:

Simpnap [4:08]

its what he deserves

Clay [4:08]

Love u too babe

Goodgirlhalo [4:09]

ಠ\_ಠ

Ponkadonk [4:09]

someone pass the popcorn

Callahottie [4:09]

Awesamdad [4:09]

Alyssaaa [4:10]

Cal beat you to it lol

Awesamdad [4:10]

I know :(

Callahottie [4:10]

I am speed

Ponkadonk [4:12]

its ok the more the better!

Ponkadonk [4:12]

thank u for the popcorn both of u :D

Awesamdad [4:12]

:)

Callahottie [4:13]

:)

Goodgirlhalo [4:13]

owo

Simpnap [4:16]

clay suck my dick

Ponkadonk [4:16]

LMAOOOO

Goodgirlhalo [4:16]

LANGUAGE SAPNAP!

Clay [4:17]

Don't have to ask me twice

Awesamdad [4:17]

that took a turn

Callahottie [4:19]

and you say I get all the bitches

Goodgirlhalo [4:19]

Language

Simpnap [4:20]

Callahan you literally DO get all the bitches

Alyssaaa [4:20]

did you just call me a bitch

Goodgirlhalo [4:20]

Language!!

Callahottie [4:20]

I'm just too good 😊

Goodgirlhalo [4:21]

Nobody listens to me :(

Clay [4:21]

I listen to you Bad :)

Goodgirlhalo [4:22]

Thank you Clay :3

Clay [4:22]

Fuck shit dammit

Goodgirlhalo [4:22]

AHHH STOP

Goodgirlhalo [4:22]

LANGUAGE

Alyssaaa [4:23]

awee poor bad

Simpnap [4:28]

im omw to the park

Callahottie [4:29]

to suck his dick?

Ponkadonk [4:29]

BAHAHAHAHAH

Awesamdad [4:30]



Simpnap [4:32]

yea i am😊

Clay [4:32]



Goodgirlhalo [4:32]

That is it I'm leaving

Callahottie [4:33]

to the park right

Simpnap [4:33]

to suck his dick too right

Alyssaaa [4:33]

OML

Goodgirlhalo [4:33]

STOP IT

Awesamdad [4:35]

Bad was slain by language

Ponkadonk [4:35]



Alyssaaa [4:35]



Callahottie [4:36]

HAHAHA

Clay [4:37]

Guys stop I think I'm actually going to bust a lung

Alyssaaa [4:37]

can confirm, he hasn't stopped wheezing

Simpnap [4:39]

awe my favorite tea kettle bitch boy <3

Goodgirlhalo [4:39]

Languageeeee

Clay [4:40]

I really missed you guys :')

Goodgirlhalo [4:40]

Awww we missed you too muffinhead :D

Ponkadonk [4:41]

we missed u 2! ♥

Ponkadonk [4:41]

Im glad u revived this gc

Awesamdad [4:42]

can't wait to see all of you guys :)

Callahottie [4:42]



<333

Alyssaaa [4:42]

:)♥♥

Simpnap [4:56]

im there where r u

Clay [4:57]

Oh wait I think I see you

Clay got up from the bench, looking out past the park to where the parking lot was ahead of them. He had spotted Sapnap's car pulling in and parking, and he had gotten down and was looking around the park area.

"Alyssa, stay here. I'll be right back," he said, and Alyssa nodded before he took off running towards Sapnap. He ignored the jolt of pain the action sent through his whole leg, pushing forward stubbornly even as his foot continued to hurt with every step taken. He yelled his name, and the other perked up at that and finally spotted him.

Clay continued running towards him, and with a smile he watched Sapnap break off into a run himself, meeting him halfway. Without warning, Clay practically barreled into Sapnap's arms, making the other let out a soft oof as he hugged him tightly.

"I'm pretty sure I was going to be the one jumping you, Claydoh," Sapnap chuckled into his shoulder, but soon enough was hugging Clay back.

"Sorry, I've just been wanting to do that since our call this morning," Clay responded honestly as he pulled back, a soft smile etched into his features. Sapnap returned it, a wordless understanding passing between the two of them.

"Poor Alyssa. You left her alone, asshole," Sapnap snickered, slinging an arm around his shoulder as the two walked back towards the way Clay had came. Clay's leg was throbbing painfully now, but he didn't care.

"Shut up," Clay rolled his eyes, a wide smile on his face. "Let's go wait for the others to arrive."

"Sure thing, bossman."



Minx [4:20]

omg it's 4:20

George [4:20]

wow Minx

George [4:20]

can't believe you know how to tell the time

Minx [4:21]

yk what nvm asshole

Minx [4:21]

oh that reminds me

Minx [4:21]

i wanna ask u smth

George [4:22]

what's up?

Minx [4:23]

is it cool if i call u

George [4:24]

sure

George's phone began vibrating in his hand with an incoming call. He felt his heart lodge itself in his throat as he picked up, suddenly nervous.

"Hello-" George was cut off, a heavy, irish accent filling his ears as Minx began speaking so quickly that her words jumbled together and George wasn't able to understand anything. "Minx, Minx, wait. Slow down. Say that again?"

There was a long groan which made George smile in amusement before Minx started up again but a lot slower, as though she were speaking to a toddler. "I said, are. You. Free. Tomorrow?"

George dropped his chin on his hand, his arm resting atop his criss-crossed legs. "I don't know. Maybe. I have to check my schedule. I'm a busy man, you know."

"Georgeeeeeee," Minx whined, and George had to physically fight down another smile, covering his mouth with his hand. "C'mon, enough already. Are you?"

"I am," George finally admitted. He could practically hear Minx smiling as she spoke.

"Okay. Okay good. That's good. That's very good."

"And why is that good, Minx?"

"Because that way I'll get to have you all for myself," Minx responded, before backtracking quickly. "Wait, no. Oh god, that sounds wrong. I didn't mean it like that."

"If I didn't know any better, I would say you were flirting with me, Minx," George said in a flash of boldness. Minx instantly began stammering on the other side, making George laugh lightly.

"Shut up, George, it's not funny," she mumbled finally, and he could imagine she was pouting. "I was going to ask you to hang out with me somewhere tomorrow but I'm starting to have second thoughts."

"Where are we hanging out?"

Minx paused at that. "You would want to?"

"Sure, why not. It's not like I have anything better to do," George teased as he flopped backwards onto his bed.

"Shut up," Minx huffed, but there was a smile evident in her voice. "I'll pick you up tomorrow then. You're staying with Karl, right?"

"I am."

"Alright, cool. And don't ask where we're going, cause it's a surprise," Minx added quickly, and George's cheeks hurt from how hard he was smiling, his stomach fluttering and his heart racing in anticipation of tomorrow.

"Can't wait."

That awkward moment you're reading a dnf book but then Minx and George are suddenly going on a date. Talk about one step forward, two steps back with this dude

Here's the second half of the big fat chapter I had written, the original was almost 8k words so I had to split it up into two chapters lmao

Also just wanted to quickly say THANK YOU GUYS SO MUCH FOR OVER 20K HITS AND OVER 1K KUDOS!! THATS INSANE GUYS OMG THANK YOU ALL I never once thought it would gain this much attention, thank you all so much for giving this story a chance and for showing me so much love, I know I say this practically every update but I rlly do appreciate you all and I love you guys I'm virtually hugging u rn

Ending this a/n here! Hasta la proxima, remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated mis pequeños <3

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 17

## Chapter Summary

George has an awakening...while sleeping

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Once everyone arrived, the group made their way to the grassy area of the park and first, apologized to all of them. Several times. And after they were practically begging him to quit apologizing already, after insisting and reassuring him that they forgave him, he told them everything.

Everything he told George that night at that party, from his failed relationship, the accident, and the overwhelming guilt he's been carrying since, the nightmares that have haunted him for months. Everything.

Somehow, having already talked about it once made the second time easier. He still got choked up in a few parts, but he didn't even shed a tear. Talking about it more really did start to make it easier, even if by the smallest fraction, but the change was there.

Besides, he had his friends by his side the whole time.

Sapnap holding his hand reassuringly, allowing Clay to grip onto him on the especially difficult parts that needed to be said, Bad slightly leaning his weight into his side, a reminder he was there, Alyssa behind him, making tiny braids out of the longer strands of his wavy, blond locks, allowing him to relax from the delicate touch, Sam passing him a water bottle whenever it was needed, or offering him some grapes he had brought with him, Ponk sitting with his legs straight forward in front of Clay's, his feet lightly tapping onto his in a soothing rhythm, Callahan watching him intently the whole time, his entire focus on Clay alone, helping him ground himself as he spoke.

They were all there for him. He felt like the biggest dickhead on planet Earth, in the entire universe, even, for having pushed them away before.

When he finished talking, they all gathered around him, as though he were the sun and by some force of gravity, all the other planets in the solar system had been pulled to the center with it, surrounding it in a comforting heat that somehow even the sun didn't hold, and hugged it tenderly. They wrapped their arms around him, and in the protective arms of his friends, the first tears finally began to fall.

How did he get this incredibly lucky?

He truly didn't deserve them.

When the following day finally came, and after Karl finally convinced him to change into some "decent clothing," George walked out the front door to find Minx waiting in front of Karl's house, rolling down the window of her white sedan with a mischievous glint in her eye. When he asked where Niki was, she said not to worry about her, because she was taking a painting class for the whole day.

George didn't say it out loud, but he was glad it would just be the two of them.

The car ride at first was a bit awkward, but it was understandable. They were practically perfect strangers and just starting to warm up to each other, and that much was true because as time passed they both seemed to relax a bit, and that initial tension quickly dissipated. The rest of the day, the two bickered and teased each other as if they had been doing so for years, as if they didn't just meet a few days prior.

Minx didn't take him to a single location. They went all over the place that day, Minx insisting he had to begin to explore the city since he would be spending the next 6 months there. She took him to an outdoor mall first to eat at a popular American restaurant in the morning, then they spent some time looking around some of the shops (mostly Game Stop). At midday they went bowling, Minx beating George easily time and time again though she had obviously rigged it (he beat her once in the end, though. That didn't stop her from rubbing her previous wins in his face). Nearing the afternoon they went to Dave and Busters where they ate lunch and George managed to get back at her by securing several wins in the arcade, along with bragging rights of course (he ended up using the points he earned to get a medium sized white Alpaca. He gave it to Minx). Finally, they ended the day at a karaoke place, in which Minx shamelessly sang very loudly and very proudly while George hardly sang a note at all, but enjoyed watching her sing her heart out (albeit terribly).

On their way out, they nearly ran into Schlatt, of all people. Talk about awkward.

They ended up ducking into an alley way beside the karaoke building and waited for him to leave. Thankfully, he didn't see them and eventually left, and the two snickered about it on their way back to Minx's car.

Minx drove George home, dropping him off just before the curfew Karl had demanded he be home by (10:00 p.m.). She walked him up to the door, the two trying to keep their voice low in case Sean or Karl were already asleep inside, and George grabbed the house key hidden under one of the potted plants beside the doorway. Before unlocking the door, he turned towards Minx, who was looking at him expectantly.

"Well, good night. I had a fun day," George grinned, and it was true. He was surprised they managed to fit so many activities into one single day, but he wasn't complaining. It had been a blast hanging out with Minx, she made for good company.

"Of course you did, I planned it," Minx teased, lightly punching his shoulder. George playfully rolled his eyes at her before the two stared at each other, a silence falling between them. The air was suddenly heavy, and George felt his heart rate begin to pick up.

Oh.

George's eyes flickered down to Minx's mouth.

Was this the right moment?

He noticed Minx begin to lean in.

Was this really happening?

George suddenly became aware of the closing distance between the two. They were practically a breath away now, and George watched as Minx's eyes fluttered closed. There was no denying what was about to happen.

This is going too fast.

In a moments panic, George jerked back a couple of inches, making Minx's eyes fly back open. He hated the look of rejection that briefly flashed in them, so he leaned in again and instead pressed a quick kiss on her cheek to hopefully make up for it.

"I'm sorry," he murmured when he pulled back. "I just don't think we should..." he trailed off, and he didn't have to say what for because he could tell Minx understood. George felt a little better when Minx gave him a small smile.

"Don't apologize. You're right, we would probably be better off as friends anyway," Minx waved him off. George nodded in agreement.

"See you tomorrow," he whispered, stepping back to the door and unlocking it. He heard Minx echo a "good night," before he shut the door, making sure to lock it. He turned his back to the door and leaned against it, carding his hand through his hair in frustration. He distantly heard Minx start her car and drive off as he slid to the floor, bringing his knees up to his chest, his eyebrows furrowed.

Why hadn't he just kiss her???

They had such an incredible day together, and he really did like Minx. She was hilarious, easy to talk to, and super fun to be around. Not to mention incredibly pretty. So why, when the moment came, he couldn't do it?

Did he not like Minx enough? But that was ridiculous, if he didn't he wouldn't have been able to enjoy an entire day in her company as much as he had.

Unless, he just didn't like her in that way?

Did he really only see Minx as a friend?

George let out a huff of exasperation, moving to get off the floor and to his feet. His head was starting to hurt from overthinking, and he did have a long day. He decided he would worry about his jumble of feelings tomorrow.

He slowly made his way up the stairs and down the hall to his and Karl's room. The house was quiet, and as George slowly inched the door open, he could see why.

Karl was sprawled out on his bed, his blankets moving up and down as he let out soft huffs of air that could have almost been snores. He was out cold. George felt himself smiling fondly as he got a set of clothes to sleep in, moving to the restroom to change out of the ones he had on. Once he was changed, he slowly got on his bed, the bed creaking under his weight. He moved under the covers and got comfortable, his eyes falling shut as his breathing began to slow.

He was out like a light.



George's eyes began to flutter open as a brightness flashed behind his closed lids. He rubbed his eyes tiredly and cringed at the light coming from beside his bed. He sat upright, feeling disoriented for a second as he squinted at his open laptop atop his nightstand, its screen blank but emitting a white light.

"What the hell?" he muttered in confusion. George pulled himself out of bed, his movements sluggish and feeling as though he were walking underwater. He glanced at Karl's bed, noticing the boy was still fast asleep in his own bed. He found it odd that the beam of light only seemed to hit George's bed and some of the surrounding area, leaving the rest of the room dark.

He reached forward to shut the laptop closed when a voice boomed in his ears, shouting, "WAIT!"

Startled, he jerked his hand back and fell to the floor, scrambling away from the laptop. He watched with a mix of fear and fascination as a hand emerged from the screen, popping out of it as if it were 3D.

"Come," the voice boomed in his ears again. In a sort of daze, and almost as though he were under some sort of trance, he got off the floor and walked back towards it, hesitantly placing his own hand atop the other's. The hand suddenly gripped onto him and pulled, George feeling his stomach drop as he was sucked into the blank screen of the laptop. He felt a rushing of wind hit his face, making his eyes sting and his ears ring loudly. He shut his eyes tight before it all suddenly stopped, and he was met with an eerie silence all around him.

He slowly opened his eyes to find someone standing in front of him. He didn't know who they were, nor what they looked like. He couldn't see the person at all, really, no matter how hard he tried to, but he knew they were there, and he was still holding onto their hand, though he couldn't really see it.

"Greetings, Georgenotfound," the voice spoke in his ear again, but softer this time. George let go of them and looked around him to find that everything was blank, infinite white nothingness in all directions.

"Where am I?" George asked, feeling a false sense of calm wash over him despite everything that was happening. He turned to the person next. "Who are you?"

"I'm Dream," the voice said. George blinked in surprise as the voice continued. "You can't really see me because you don't yet know who I am, but you somehow know that I'm standing in front of you, don't you? Freaky, right?"

"This is so weird," George whispered as he gazed into the person's eyes, seeing absolutely nothing. He reached up towards the person's face to lightly caress their cheek, feeling it there, knowing it's there, but not seeing it. He could feel Dream lean into the touch, and somehow he



knew they were smiling.

"I'm dreaming, aren't I?" George asked in wonder, not retracting his hand. A soft chuckle filled his ears.

"You're just now coming to that conclusion? C'mon, George. I thought you were smarter than that," the voice teased lightly. George frowned as he muttered a "shut up" with no real heat behind it.

"Hmmm, you must miss me if I'm showing up in your dreams now. Simp behavior," the voice cooed.

"Even in my dreams you're annoying. Good to know," George drawled sarcastically as he finally let go of Dream's face. Dream laughed, and for some reason after the sound stopped George only wanted to hear it again. Instead of saying that, he asked, "Why are you here?"

"I don't know. You're the one dreaming this up, dummy," Dream smiled innocently, and George had to resist the urge to roll his eyes at them.

"But why you of all people? Why not someone else- like Minx. I hung out with her all day and was just thinking about her before going to bed, wouldn't it make sense for her to show up in my dreams instead?"

Dream tilted his head to the side. "Maybe, and yet I'm the one that's here."

"But I haven't even thought about you today," George's brows furrowed in confusion. Dream moved closer to him, hooking a cool finger under his chin and tilting his head upwards, the action giving him a sense of déjà vu.

"Maybe you think about me more than you think. Maybe I've been in your subconscious all along," they responded with amusement twinkling in their not-there eyes. George felt his cheeks flush the slightest bit.

"I don't even know who you are. Or what you look like."

"Doesn't seem to matter to you though, does it," the voice countered, before leaning in closer. "Unless there's someone you secretly want me to be?"

Dream stepped away before he could rebuke their statement, putting their hands behind their back and leaning back a little on their feet. "Why do you think about me so much, George?"

"I don't think of you," George said stubbornly, crossing his arms. At Dream's unconvinced look, he admitted, "I guess because I wonder sometimes."

"Wonder what?"

"Who you are. Why you decided to email me that first time. Why me out of all people. Why you haven't responded to my last email and if maybe I said something that-" George stopped there, pressing his lips into a thin line. Dream looked amused.

"And you say you don't think about me," they giggled, and George ignored the heat pooling in his face.

"Shut up."

"You tell me to shut up a lot, and yet you want me to email you back," Dream grinned mischievously, laughing when George stuck his tongue out at them. "It's cute."

"Don't call me cute."

"You always get embarrassed when I call you cute," Dream pointed out. George opened his mouth to speak when the voice cut him off again. "How do I know? Cause I'm literally in your head, George. All of this is coming from your brain, so I happen to know everything that's in there."

"How convenient," George answered with lack of anything better to say, and that made Dream laugh again. George realized he liked making Dream laugh.

"You're such an idiot," the voice said with fondness evident in their voice, and George felt that same feeling of *deja vu* again. That made Dream regard George closely, studying his face.

"You know, it's weird," Dream started, and when they stopped talking there, George looked at them with confusion.

"What's weird?"

"Even though you don't actually know who I am, you gave me the mannerisms of someone you do know," Dream finished simply. George felt his cheeks warm again, for some reason feeling embarrassed.

"Who?" he asked anyway. Dream walked up to him again, coming up so close to George that he had to look up to meet their eyes.

"You know who. I don't even have to tell you," Dream whispered, and suddenly he wasn't looking at eyes of nothing, but ones he could actually see.

Ones he had stared into before.

He gazed into them now, suddenly feeling tired. His vision was beginning to turn hazy in the edges.

"What color are your eyes?" he heard himself mumble, and he felt it was a question he had already asked before.

"Green," the voice humored him, except now it was one he recognized.

"I knew it. There was no way your eyes were pissed colored," he responded automatically, feeling as if he were reciting the lines of a play he somehow knew by heart. The person burst out laughing, their face drawing ever so slightly nearer, and George felt his heart hiccuping in his chest at the sound. His eyes were growing heavy, and finally he couldn't keep them open any longer.

"Sleep now," he said as a form of explaining his eyes drawing closed. Suddenly he was back in his bed, and he knew there was someone lying beside him, watching him, but he didn't open his eyes to look.

There was no reason to. George felt safe with him.

"Good night, George," Clay whispered, his voice echoing in his mind, like a memory. George felt himself smiling.

"Night."



George woke up in the middle of the night to blood rushing in his ears, his heart insistently pounding against his chest, and his face burning to the touch. He yanked the covers off of him, feeling pinpricks of sweat uncomfortably clinging on to every inch of his body. He stared into the darkness of the room, looking at absolutely nothing while his mind raced with a million different thoughts.

He didn't fall asleep again.

#### Chapter End Notes

Decided to keep this chapter short :) what did you guys think? I'm kind of proud of how I wrote the dream sequence ngl. Hopefully it made sense, and if it didn't, lol it's a dream anyway and dreams can be confusing, so have fun trying to decipher it!

Remember to take breaks from your phone, eat your meals, and stay hydrated my little meow meows <3

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 18

## Chapter Summary

the perfect combination of imperfections

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Just as George was beginning to finally slip back into sleep, Karl was jumping onto his bed and shouting "WAKE UP CUTIE" into his ear, effectively blowing his ear drums to smithereens. Karl had to practically drag George out of bed and downstairs to the kitchen for breakfast.

Once George finished his food and had changed out of his pajamas and into a sweatshirt and pants, he was getting his books together when he spotted his laptop set atop his nightstand out of the corner of his eye.

He didn't want to think about his dream. It had kept him up the whole of the night, and it was only his lack of sleep and sluggish mind that was helping him kind of forget thinking about it. But just a mere glance at his laptop had instantly brought it all back full force to the front of his mind.

He stared at it, half expecting it to suddenly open up to a blank, white screen and for a hand to reach out of it towards him. But he knew that that wouldn't happen, and it remained shut, just as he had left it. He pursed his lips tightly, frowning at it like it had done him a personal injustice. He had become so accustomed to the warmth growing on his face that he didn't even notice it.

After a moments hesitation, he walked up to it and slowly opened it himself, the laptop beginning to hum under his touch as it booted up. After putting in his password, the screen pulled up the site he had left open the last time he used it. It was his email, and he stared at the unrefreshed page, still displaying no unopened emails.

"Fuck," he whispered, half of his mind nagging him to refresh the page to check, just in case, while the other screamed at him that he would regret doing so. Eventually his curiosity got the best of him, and his internal battle grew silent when he impulsively moved the mouse up to the corner of the screen and refreshed the page. His heart was drumming loudly in his ears as he held his breath, watching the screen go white, and then the Gmail logo animation show up on the screen. After what felt like years, his inbox appeared.

He felt his heart stop, and then speed up not a second after. His throat ran dry as he stared at not one, but two new emails from Dream.

They had been sent at different times. While the first email had been sent Saturday night, the second hadn't been sent Saturday, or yesterday, but at 1 in the morning, around the time George had woken up from his dream. And this whole time these two emails had been sitting there, waiting for him.

Where there usually was no subject to their emails, there was one this time, on the latter of the two. It was the title that scared him most.

"I have a confession to make"

Don't get ahead of yourself George, he told himself, attempting to fight down the furious blush growing on his cheeks but failing. It could literally be about anything.

George made a mental list of "confessions" Dream could possibly make.

Maybe they were going to admit something dumb, like they took three cookies instead of the two permitted from the school's cafeteria. They probably only added a subject to the email to be extra dramatic, like usual.

Or maybe they were going to reveal who they were. It was possible that's all it was, and even that would be big enough to deem a "confession."

But all of a sudden, his mind was reminding him of moments from his dream the night before, of how he held onto Dream's cheek and they leaned into the touch, of them hooking their finger under his chin and leaning down, inches away from his face, how they claimed George thought of them.

It was just a stupid dream, he reminded himself, but his cheeks flushed red at the mere thought of it. Why had he dreamt such a thing to begin with? It didn't make sense, he didn't even know who this person was and yet, he had grown fond enough of them that they were popping up in his subconscious uninvited.

Except, for some reason, his mind had given Dream the attributes of someone he did know. He suddenly recalled their words, how they claimed George gave them the mannerisms of someone he knew despite not actually knowing who Dream was. And something else they had said earlier on.

"Unless there's someone you secretly want me to be?"

George shook the thought away as he clicked on the first email sent, the one with no subject. He didn't want to think about that right now.

Dream  
to georgenotfound@gmail.com

Hey George!

I'm sorry to hear about your friend. You're talking about Clay, right? I understand why you may be worried, but I'm sure he's fine. Injuries like that occur all the time in football and he has the weekend to recover, I'm sure he appreciates you worrying about him though. And don't worry about giving me the details for whatever is going on with you two, I hope you get the chance to talk to him about it!

Also never apologize for rambling. Or writing me essays either lol. I really appreciate you still emailing me back and feeling like you can talk to me, even though you have no idea who I really am. I actually don't know how you would react if you knew who I was, but I'm hoping you won't be disappointed haha

You've grown on me too George :)

As always,

Dream

Reply Forward

Seemed normal enough. The email relaxed him a bit, an unconscious smile slipping onto his face. He was probably just overthinking everything because of his dream from last night.

But it did catch him off guard seeing Dream mention Clay. Because of course the two weren't the same person.

Right?

Right. They weren't. Clay would have told him by now that he was Dream, and it would mean Dream had lied about a couple of things when they first started emailing him.

He knew this and yet, there was still an inkling of doubt in the back of his mind. His subconscious had given Dream Clay's mannerisms for a reason.

Did a part of him believe Clay and Dream could be the same person?

Did he want them to be?

"Georgie!"

George whipped his head up to the doorway where Karl was leaning against the frame, looking at him with raised brows. How long had Karl been calling his name?

"Are you ready? What're you looking at?" Karl tilted his head to the side curiously, glancing at the open laptop on his nightstand. George turned back and exited the email, only to see the other email Dream had sent still sitting there, unopened.

"I have a confession to make," it still read, taunting him. Daring him to open it. Instead, he shut the laptop closed and turned to gather his books, walking up to Karl.

"Nothing. I'm ready," George smiled a bit dismissively, though a bit forced as he walked down the hall to make it to the stairs. He missed seeing the worried expression on Karl's face, clearly noticing in his expression that it wasn't nothing at all.



"Sapnap I really screwed up this time you have to help me," Clay let out in a single breath, shaking him by the shoulders roughly. The shorter male grabbed hold of his arms and took them off his shoulder, a concerned look etched onto his features.

"Dude, chill. What happened?"

"I did something really, really stupid and now I'm regretting it," Clay explained, flailing his arms around every which way. Sapnap gave him a confused look that was border-lining impatience.

"You're going to have to be more specific cause I have no idea what you're talking about."

"Clay sent George marriage papers," Wilbur walked up behind Clay, a shit eating grin on his face. Clay's face flushed red as he shoved Wilbur lightly, the other letting out a soft laugh at the action.

"I didn't! Shut up, Wilbur," Clay huffed, turning back to Sapnap. "I sent him an email-"

"Asking for his hand in marriage," Wilbur interrupted, making Clay let out a strangled noise as he punched his shoulder.

"Oh my god, will you ever let that go??"

"Of course I won't."

Sapnap's eyes had been darting between the two as they continued to bicker before he realized what Clay had been saying. "Wait, you sent George an email?"

Clay stopped trying to murder Wilbur in favor of nodding at Sapnap, his eyebrows furrowing anxiously as he thought about his stupid, impulsive mistake. "Yup."

The two fell silent at that, and Clay could tell Sapnap was recalling the time he had asked for George's email, putting two and two together. A lot had happened since then, and he didn't know where to even begin to explain his shenanigans through the guise of 'Dream.'

"Good morning, Techno!" Wilbur spoke up suddenly, pulling Clay out of his thoughts. He and Sapnap turned to see Technoblade walking by them, who had stopped dead in his tracks. He whipped around, his eyes flashing with annoyance, but when he spotted Wilbur the emotion almost immediately vanished, as if it had never been there to begin with, and he wore his usual neutral expression once again.

"Hello, Wilbur."

"What did you call me?"

Techno gave him a confused look. "Wilbur."

"I've told you, Techno, call me by my real name," Wilbur crossed his arms, raising an eyebrow in defiance at the other. Techno rolled his eyes at him.

"Okay, William."

"Thank you," Wilbur grinned as Sapnap and Clay shared a confused glance. Clay shrugged at his questioning gaze.

"Hurry on to class, Will-I-Am," Techno drawled as he began walking away from the three. Wilbur surged forward and grabbed his shoulder, stopping him.

"It's pronounced William," Wilbur frowned. Techno leaned in a bit, his face serious but an amused glint clear in his eyes as he slowly drawled out, "Will-I-Am."

"Techno, no, I know you're American but really that's not how it's pronounced-"

"Whatever, Will-I-Am," Techno quipped, turning on his heel to continue marching down the hall. Wilbur let out a noise of complaint as he went after him, continuing to argue with him about his name, leaving Sapnap and Clay behind.

"What was that about?" Sapnap spoke up once they were out of earshot.

"No clue," Clay admitted, scratching the back of his neck in confusion. "They've gotten close ever since Techno drove him home from Karl's party."

"Good for them," Sapnap grinned at the spot where Techno and Wilbur had just been before turning back to Clay with a serious expression. "So?"

"So what?" Clay blurted out dumbly. Sapnap rolled his eyes at him.

"What did the email say?"

"Um."

"Clay."

"It was a mistake! I was up at like 1 in the morning, I was sleep deprived, I wasn't thinking straight and for some reason thought it would be a good idea to write this email and I sent it on impulse and now I can't take it back and I'm freaking out, Sap!" Clay clung to Sapnap's shoulders again, knowing his eyes probably looked maniacal. Sapnap sighed as he took Clay's hands off his shoulders again, but this time held onto them with his own, squeezing them tightly.

"Show me the email."

Clay's eyes darted away as he stared instead at a crack in one of the lockers just next to them, feeling his face flush the slightest bit. "It's embarrassing."

"I need to see what we're dealing with. Only if you're fine with me reading the email, of course. If not, you don't have to show it to me. It's up to you," Sapnap reassured. Clay drew his gaze back to Sapnap's, feeling a bit of calm wash over him, however small, just from looking into his best friend's eyes. He always felt he was able to relax a bit more in Sapnap's presence. Knowing him for years made it feel like he was a piece of home away from home.

"You can read it," Clay decided softly, Sapnap finally letting go of his hands as Clay reached to his back pocket to pull out his phone. He pulled up his second email and clicked on the one he had sent to George at an ungodly hour that morning, not even wanting to look at it as he quickly turned it so the screen faced Sapnap instead. Sapnap took it into his hands, squinting at the screen.

"Dreamwastaken? I didn't know you had this email," Sapnap pointed out as he looked back up at the taller blonde. Clay shifted a bit, fiddling with his fingers nervously.

"It's a uh- long story. I'll tell you later, but long story short he doesn't know these emails are from me. He only knows it's from someone that goes by 'Dream.'" Clay explained. Sapnap gave him a weird look.

"So why are you worried if he doesn't know it's from you?"

"I was planning on telling him who I was at some point, but because of this I don't- I don't know, just read the email," Clay urged him on as he continued fidgeting in place, glancing around the hall



at the different faces walking past him. Thankfully, he hadn't seen George up till now. He has no idea how he was going to keep it together during homeroom, when he had no choice but to be in his presence for an entire class period.

A few moments passed as Sapnap read the email, his face reacting in different ways to the different parts of it. His eyes would widen at one bit, he would let out a snort at another, his mouth would drop open in an 'o' shape at a different part. Throughout the few moments it took Sapnap to read it, which actually felt like decades to Clay, he could feel his face burning in embarrassment as he covered most of his face with his hands, shyly peeking out from under them. Sapnap finally reached the end and looked up with a sly smile.

"That was cute."

"Shut up, don't patronize me," Clay mumbled out behind his hands before finally letting them fall with a sigh. "It was a dumb move. It's embarrassing, isn't it."

Sapnap let out a snort. "Very."

"Fuck."

"But hey, he doesn't know it's from you, dude. You can just, not tell him you're Dream. It's that simple," Sapnap shrugged. Clay shook his head, raking one of his hands through his curly, dirty blonde hair only for it to flop back into place slightly messier than before.

"He doesn't know for now, but it won't be long before he figures out that I'm Dream. And even if he doesn't, I need to tell him the truth at some point. I feel so shitty lying to him like this, especially now that we've gotten closer. I don't even know why I sent that email in the first place, Sap. God, I was up super late because I couldn't sleep and I just started thinking about him and then next thing I know, I'm writing that. And then I got like this- sudden flash of boldness out of nowhere, and at the time I was like, we all die at some point so fuck it and I just boop! Clicked send. And then I stared at my screen for several minutes until the reality of what I had just done finally began to sink in so I started to full on panic, but when I looked up how to unsend an email, I find out it only gives you 30 seconds to unsend it?? And then after that you can't anymore?? Like, that's super fucking dumb, some people have delayed reactions to things! I need at least like 10 minutes to even begin to process my actions-"

"Clay, Clay, hold on, slow down," Sapnap cut in before he could spiral any further.

"Holding on, slowing down," Clay responded lamely, shifting from foot to foot as Sapnap handed his phone back to him. He didn't even glance at the screen when he turned it off and pocketed it again. He dropped his gaze down to his hands. He hadn't even noticed they had begun to shake. "I'm just...I'm fucking terrified, Sap."

Sapnap's eyes softened as he noticed that Clay was trembling slightly. Sapnap moved forward and brought him into a hug, squeezing tightly as the other buried himself into Sapnap's shoulder.

"It'll be okay. We'll figure something out, okay? He doesn't need to find out yet," Sapnap murmured. Clay sniffed a bit but nodded, feeling the pinprick of tears begin to sting his eyes as he urged them back.

"Am I...interrupting something?" a voice suddenly spoke up. Clay immediately launched himself away from Sapnap, nearly tripling backwards on his own two feet as he immediately recognized that all too familiar accent. Blood rushed to his face at an alarming rate as he blinked owlishly at the shorter brunette standing beside him, who was staring back up at him with wide eyes.

"Uh, hi," Clay croaked out as he blinked back the tears that had been collecting in his eyes.

"Hi," George responded, tilting his head to the side as he glanced at Sapnap. "Is everything okay?"

"No, yeah!" Clay blurted out quickly, wanting to punch himself in the face at his own sudden lack of social skills. George gave him a small smile that had his heart rate picking up immediately.

"No or yeah, pick one," he chuckled teasingly, sending Clay into a ramble.

"No I meant- yeah, we're good. Everything's fine. Just peachy. Sweet and dandy."

Oh my god stop talking.

"Alright," George gave him a questioning look but didn't push further, despite probably being completely aware of how weird Clay was acting. "Actually, I wanted to talk to you, Clay."

Clay flicked his wide eyes over to Sapnap, who raised his eyebrows back at him. Clay cleared his throat a bit, "What's up?"

"Oh actually before that- Karl was looking for you, Sapnap. He went to class already," George said. Clay felt his hands began to sweat and his heart begin to pound in his ears as he realized this meant Sapnap was going to leave the two alone, so he shot a pleading look at Sapnap, hoping he would get the message to stay. His heart dropped when the other merely gave him an apologetic one back.

"I'll get going then, see you guys in class," Sapnap forced a smile before darting away from them and towards their homeroom. Clay swallowed roughly as he watched him go before turning back to George, who was already watching him closely. He could feel the uncomfortable sweat collecting at the nape of his neck.

"Is there something on my face?" Clay joked without thinking. George's eyes widened as he looked away quickly, a light dusting of pink coloring his cheeks.

"No," he replied quickly, now not meeting Clay's gaze. Clay mentally face palmed.

Nice going dumbass, he scolded himself. He had already managed to somehow make an already awkward situation even more awkward.

"So um, I wanted to apologize."

Clay tilted his head in confusion. "What do you want to apologize for?"

"For not remembering what happened at the party," George clarified, briefly meeting his eye before looking away again. "I only recall bits and pieces, but it's not nearly enough to remember what we had talked about. Sorry."

"George, no, don't apologize," Clay said softly, unconsciously placing a hand in reassurance atop the other's arm. He didn't notice the way George stiffened at the contact. "Seriously, it's not your fault you don't remember. You were drunk, and I'm not upset you forgot. Really, it's fine."

"But it's not fine," George insisted stubbornly. Before Clay could rebuke, he jabbed a finger at Clay's chest, a sudden fire lighting up his big, brown eyes. Clay hoped George couldn't feel the pounding of his heart against his chest. "I'm not dumb, Clay. I saw how upset you were at the game when I told you I didn't remember anything. Don't pretend it's fine if only to spare my own

feelings.”

“I’m not doing it to spare your feelings, George. Really, it’s fine, so don’t worry-”

“What I’m trying to say is that your feelings matter too, not just mine,” George cut him off, his eyes softening a bit as he dropped his hand from his chest. “It’s completely valid to feel disappointed, upset, even mad that I forgot something that clearly was a big deal to you, whether it was my intention to or not. So don’t bottle up how you feel, either.”

Clay gaped at him, feeling a swarm of emotions take over him all at once. He didn’t know whether he wanted to laugh or cry. He felt as if his heart was dropping and soaring at the same time, his insides tingling as he felt every part of him light up in an almost overwhelming sense of euphoria. He knew George wasn’t perfect, nobody was, but in that moment, he couldn’t help but think it.

George is perfect.

If not perfect, he was the perfect combination of imperfections.

He couldn’t hold back the smile that broke onto his face, which was definitely not what George had expected as his eyes got all big and owlish in surprise. That made laughter begin to bubble out of him, and he leaned forward a bit while clutching his stomach as he let out wheezes at George’s reaction, sending the boy into further confusion which only made Clay begin to laugh harder.

“What’s so funny,” George asked hesitantly, though there was a smile pulling at his lips and he seemed to be holding back laughter himself. Clay finally calmed down enough to speak, rubbing his eyes as they had begun to tear up from how hard he had been laughing.

“Oh, George. George, George, George,” Clay shook his head fondly as he ruffled the shorter boy’s hair, who let out a noise of complaint at the action as he attempted to duck out of reach to fix his hair. Clay chuckled lightly, feeling his affection for this boy fill every one of his senses, making him grin so hard his cheeks began to hurt. “You’re such an idiot.”

“M’not,” George pouted, crossing his arms in a way Clay couldn’t help but think was adorable. Clay let out a soft laugh.

“You don’t get it, George,” Clay sighed with a smile, and at George’s confused look he continued. “I’m not disappointed, upset, or mad with you. Even last Friday I wasn’t, not really. Maybe I was sad for a little bit, but it was never really against you. I can always just retell you everything I told you that night.”

“True, but still...” George furrowed his brows. Clay lightly poked at the crease that formed between George’s eyebrows. George took a step back in surprise, reaching a hand up to touch where Clay had poked him.

“Don’t do that, you’ll get wrinkles,” Clay said as he retracted his hand. George blinked at him before snorting and rolling his eyes at him, but the gesture looked fond.

“You sound like my mom now,” George laughed softly, giving Clay a soft smile. Clay couldn’t help but smile back, and the two stared at each other for a few moments, not saying anything, just as the bell rang.

“Oh shit, we should get to class,” George spoke up quickly as he began to walk away.

“George, wait.”

George turned around, raising his brows in question. Clay reached up to scratch the back of his neck, a nervous grin plastered on his face.

“So, are we good?” Clay asked softly, willing his hands not to start fidgeting as he for some reason held his breath in anticipation. George stared at him for a few moments before a grin broke onto his face as he let out a soft snort.

“Of course we are, dummy,” George teased lightly before he turned back around to continue to walk towards homeroom. Clay sighed in relief, feeling a dopey grin slip onto his face as he followed after him, falling in step with him.

They walked side by side, Clay stealing glances at George a couple of times, thinking about how easy it had been to fall for the boy. And how everything he said, everything he did, only continued to make him fall harder. Clay’s heart seemed to skip happily as the butterflies in his stomach danced to the beat of it.

He knew it was going to be very hard to get over George. He didn’t even want to think of it.

While Clay had been preoccupied watching George out of the corner of his eye, the other had noticed the time from a clock down the hall, letting out a soft squeak in surprise.

“Clay, run, we have a minute!” George said urgently as he grabbed Clay by the wrist and broke off into a run, the blonde stunned only for a moment before he began running, too. At some point, Clay moved out of George’s hold and grabbed a hold of his hand instead as he surged forward, the obvious faster one of the two both due to athletic ability and longer legs. He felt a sting in his ankle for running but he ignored it. It didn’t hurt too bad anyway.

Their hands remained intertwined as they sprinted to homeroom, just barely making it as the tardy bell rang out. They didn’t get a chance to think about the hand holding as they quickly let go of each other’s hands and made their way to their respective seats. The teacher began calling for attendance as Clay sat down, catching his breath from the run.

Without thinking, Clay glanced back at George, only to notice the other’s eyes were already on him. George flinched in surprise when their eyes met as if he had been caught, which made a bright smile slip onto Clay’s face. George shyly returned it before he looked away and leaned his chin on his hand, hiding his smile from sight.

If Clay hadn’t known any better, he would have sworn George had been blushing.

## Chapter End Notes

hey lol

this chapter is so bad I’m sorry I’m sleep deprived and just wrote a 1.4k word essay analysis that was actually supposed to be only 700 words max for my English class in under an hour because I had procrastinated it and sent it in 3 minutes before it was due these midterms are killing me slowly.

oh also strap yourselves in for the next chapter babes things are about to get funky and not in a good way

also sorry I've been terrible at responding to comments lately :( I've been so busy I haven't gotten around to, I promise I'll respond to everyone this chapter and go back to read the comments I didn't see from previous chapters as soon as I can, I seriously appreciate every single one of your guys' comments you guys have no idea how much it can make my day <3 ily guys

you know the drill- no mo phone! nom nom food! hydrate or diedrate! all that jazz ily all hope u guys are having a good day/night

mimis time for me now

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 19

## Chapter Summary

realizations and shit

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

George wasn't able to pay attention the whole class.

He couldn't help it. His dream last night, the emails he received from Dream, his conversation with Clay this morning. He couldn't get any of it out of his head no matter how much he wanted to.

He couldn't help staring at the back of Clay's head for practically the whole class either, his mind racing with a million thoughts. And Clay was no idiot, he should've known he would feel someone staring daggers into his head, even if George didn't realize he was doing it at first.

He got caught staring. Multiple times.

And every time Clay would glance back at him and their eyes would meet for the briefest of moments, he would flick his gaze back to the front, his cheeks burning. And every time, he would see Clay grin out of the corner of his eye, or hear him snicker softly to himself.

And every time, it made George's heart drum faster, louder.

Too loud.

And like an idiot, he wouldn't learn his lesson, and his eyes would drift back to the taller blonde in the black hoodie.

At some point, he started feeling a wave of drowsiness overcome him. In the midst of his overthinking, he had completely forgotten he hardly slept a wink the night before, and his body was beginning to beg him for some rest.

Just as he felt himself drifting off, the bell rang. It startled George back awake, his involuntary jerk making him tip backwards in his chair, sending him toppling to the floor in an instant. The people around him turned to look at the ruckus he made, and George was surrounded with a cacophony of laughter and worry from voices all around him. He heard Sapnap start laughing, Karl holding back giggles while asking him if he was alright.

He wasn't able to pay them any mind, though, when black nike shoes filled his vision, and he looked up to stare into eyes the color of spun gold.

He felt all the noise around him drown out, like his head was forcibly submerged underwater. For some reason he felt disoriented, and in the midst of his daze, he wished really badly he was able to see the color green.

"Did you hit your head against the floor, or something?" Clay was saying, and George finally tuned back in to the bustling noise of students leaving the classroom around him. He blinked up at

the boy, who was looking down at him with a playful grin, but at George's silence his smile dropped, replaced with a worried frown. "Hey, are you okay?"

"Um," George stammered out, his mind suddenly blanking. He didn't even register Clay moving down to hook his hand under George's arm and help hoist him back to his feet, and he felt his mind begin to spin.

He convinced himself it was because he got up too fast, not because Clay was suddenly mere inches away from him, peering down at him with big, worried eyes.

"George, you're pale. Did you hurt yourself? Are you sick?"

"I'm fine," George let out in a strangled breath, pushing Clay back a bit and regaining some personal space. "I just didn't sleep well last night."

That was an understatement. George could nap all day if he wanted to, so the fact that he managed to wake up at an unholy hour and not fall back asleep after was alarming for him. He should have expected his body would begin to shut down at any moment, but with everything else distracting him, he hadn't thought of it.

But how was he supposed to explain that the reason he hardly got any sleep was all because of a stupid dream?

"Oh," Clay responded, and something flashed in his eyes, though it was so brief it didn't completely register in George's mind. He was sure he must have imagined it. "Any particular reason? Did um, something happen? Is something bothering you?"

"Not particularly," George said slowly, confused at Clay's sudden antsy behavior. He noticed Clay fidgeting with his hands, and his eyes wouldn't meet George's.

He seemed almost...guilty?

What would Clay feel guilty about?

Before he could ask, Karl was at his side and getting all up in his face, too. "Georgie, I knew you were acting weird this morning! Are you seriously sick? We can go to the nurse, and if you're not feeling too good I can take you home."

"Karl, I'm fine. Really. Just tired," George gave him a reassuring smile, though he still felt a tad bit light headed. He would be fine as long as he got some rest tonight, so there was no reason to make anyone worry.

"If you're sure," Karl responded, and though he didn't look entirely convinced, he gave his shoulder a light squeeze.

"Clay, wait up!" Sappnap spoke up, and George turned to watch Sappnap run towards the doorway where he just barely caught Clay exiting it, Wilbur already trailing behind him. George hadn't even realized at what point Clay had walked away from them, and he had lost his opportunity to ask what that look was all about. He turned back towards Karl when he let out a huff in frustration.

"He's definitely avoiding me," he muttered, crossing his arms and staring at the doorway where the boys had just left.

"Clay?" George tilted his head in question, and Karl turned back to give him a surprised look.

"What? No, not Clay. I meant Sapnap."

"Oh," George said, still confused. "Why would he be avoiding you? When I told him you were looking for him, he said he would come and find you."

Karl's face scrunched up in a mix of annoyance and hurt. "I can't believe he told you that, because he definitely didn't. He walked in right when the teacher began calling everyone to their seats, and he didn't even look at me. I tried getting his attention before the bell rang, but he acted like he couldn't hear me! I wasn't even whispering!"

"Why would he do that?"

"I don't know!" Karl groaned, hooking his arm through George's and leading him out of the classroom just as the next class began pouring in. He quit pouting for a minute as his eyes widened in some sort of realization. "Or...was it because of..."

"Because of what?"

Karl didn't say anything else, and George glanced at him to realize the boy was lost in thought, his eyebrows scrunching together slightly, a noticeable flush coloring his cheeks. "Karl-?"

"George, if I tell you something, you have to promise not to tell anybody," Karl demanded suddenly, his grip on George's arm tightening as he stared deeply into George's eyes. Surprised, George merely nodded in confirmation he wouldn't. "I kissed Sap."

"WHAT?!" George shrieked, and Karl's hand immediately flew up to clasp over George's mouth, a string of nervous giggles escaping him as he stammered out an explanation.

"Wait wait wait, not like that. It was a kiss on the cheek, nothing else," Karl reassured quickly, but it still left George baffled. George removed Karl's hand off his mouth and stopped them from walking, still gaping at him.

"Why the kiss though?" George asked, not getting it. His brain was running too slowly at the moment, and he was having a difficult time processing this. Karl let go of George's arm to shyly scratch the back of his neck.

"I have a um...crush on him," Karl admitted with a sheepish grin, his face red as a tomato, though George couldn't see it. George's mouth dropped open.

"I see," George said finally, nodding stiffly. "That's- that's awesome, Karl. Real cool."

Karl stared at him for a second before beginning to giggle hysterically at George's robotic response, hooking an arm around his shoulder and continuing to lead them towards their next class. "Georgie, you're so awkward."

"I'm sorry, I just never know what I'm supposed to say in these scenarios," George sighed in defeat, rubbing at his eye tiredly. "Talking about crushes and stuff...m' not used to it."

"You talked to me about Minx, though. And you said you liked her, so that's technically talking about crushes," Karl pointed out, and George didn't know what to say to that. "Which, by the way, you never told me how the date went!"

"It was fine," George responded stiffly. He felt guilty he hadn't even thought about Minx since the night before, when he realized he only liked Minx as a friend. "I had fun. She's cool to hang out with."



"And? Will there be a second date?" Karl wiggled his eyebrows at him, a mischievous grin on his face, but before he could get a chance to respond, Karl whipped his gaze back forward, noticing something ahead of them. George turned, too, to see Sapnap about to walk through the doorway to their shared class, but instead he caught Karl's eye and stopped short of going inside, his eyes going wide,

"Sap!" Karl yelled suddenly, startling both George and Sapnap. He let go of his hold on George and began speed walking towards him, making Sapnap let out what sounded like a squeak before turning on his heel and running back down the hall the way he came. George could hear Karl's offended gasp before he broke off into a sprint after him. "Why are you running?! Class isn't that way, jackass!"

George watched the two push past people walking to class until they disappeared around a corner. He hesitated for a moment, considering running after them, but decided whatever was going on between them, they would have to deal with, and he didn't want to be the one to intrude. He walked into the classroom alone, slumping into his seat once he reached it.

He glanced around the classroom, noticing BadBoyHalo at one side of the room, sitting in his seat and glaring up at Skeppy, who was leaning over his table and into his space a little bit, a smirk evident in his features. He also spotted Tommy with Tubbo conversing with a really tall guy with light brown hair, though Tommy seemed to mostly be screaming profanities at the guy as Tubbo attempted to calm him down. Heaven knows why he seemed so pissed off with the guy, but George had learned from experience that the taller blonde had a really bad temper, so he couldn't exactly say he was surprised, either.

George's thoughts began to drift elsewhere as he thought back to how Clay had acted when he told him he hadn't slept well the night before. He had looked guilty, but what would he even feel guilty for?

He wasn't the reason George didn't get enough sleep. Well, he kind of was, but he didn't force him to have that weird dream, it was his own subconscious messing with him and making him overthink everything.

If anything, the only person that could understandably feel guilty would be Dream. They had sent him an email around that time, though he didn't notice it till the next morning.

...holy shit.

George felt his head start to pound. Could it really be? There was no way...but what if...?

He decided he was too tired for this. He was being delusional. But his curiosity had been piqued, and he knew he wouldn't be able to let it go.

As he thought this, his head fell to rest on his arms, and the conversations around him began to blur together as his eyes grew too heavy to keep open. His swarm of thoughts began to slow, and he heard the teacher tell the class to settle down, but by then her voice seemed far away, like he was listening to her from the opposite end of a very long tunnel.

George slept through the whole class.

"Stop running!"

"Stop chasing me!"

"You-"

Karl took the opportunity Sapnap nearly barreled into someone to reach forward and yank at his white hoodie, the sudden action making a surprised yelp escape the boy as Karl pulled him backwards towards him. Nearly tripping over his feet, he fell backwards to land his back against Karl's chest as Karl grabbed hold of his shoulders, making the two freeze.

Karl felt his face immediately burn up as he stared down at the other boy, who was looking back and up at him with wide eyes, his face looking redder than normal. Deciding the situation couldn't get any worse, Karl impulsively wrapped his arms around Sapnap's neck in a loose choke hold, making the shorter boy stiffen.

"If you try to run away I will seriously honk you up," Karl threatened lowly, and he could practically feel Sapnap swallow roughly.

"Yes sir," he practically breathed in response, and after a moment Karl finally let him go. Sapnap swiveled around to glare at him, though it was hard to take seriously with how red his face looked. "What do you want?"

"You've been avoiding me."

"No I haven't," Sapnap responded stubbornly, pursing his lips and looking away. Karl felt the sudden urge to slap him.

"You literally started running away when you saw me coming!" Karl complained loudly, shoving his chest a little roughly. Sapnap looked back up at him with those stupid puppy dog eyes, and Karl reluctantly felt the fight begin to leave his body. "I just...we need to talk."

Sapnap opened his mouth to respond just as the first bell rang, Karl letting out a frustrated groan at how terribly this was working out for him.

"This conversation isn't over," Karl gritted out, the other nodding silently in response. He turned on his heel to stomp to class, Sapnap reluctantly following close behind, making their way back in silence.

Before they entered the classroom, Karl stopped Sapnap outside the door, turning on him again to pin him with a stern stare.

"We'll talk later. Ok?" It wasn't exactly a question but a demand, and it did the trick as Sapnap agreed, albeit a bit reluctantly.

They sat down at their respective seats, and Karl noticed George had his head tucked in his arms atop his table, his breathing slowed. He leaned towards him to lightly tap his back, but the boy didn't so much as stir.

"Is he asleep?" Sapnap asked. Karl had to bite back a comment on Sapnap only now talking to him to instead shrug in response.

"I guess so. He said he didn't sleep well last night, so don't wake him up."

"Poor Gogy," Sapnap cooed, and the only thing Karl needed to bite back now was a fond grin that threatened to break through. "Was there any particular reason for it?"

"For what?"

"For his staying up late," Sapnap added offhandedly, taking out his bottle of water and bringing it up to his mouth to drink.

Karl racked his brain for one, but the only one that he could come up with was George's date. "Maybe he couldn't sleep after he went out with Minx."

Sapnap spit out the water he was drinking, going into a coughing fit as he quickly stammered out an apology to the person seated in front of him he had ungraciously sprayed. He whirled back to gape at Karl, his eyes going big as saucers.

"He went out...on a date...with Minx?" he repeated, his voice cracking and going a little bit high pitched.

"Huh? Yeah. He uh- yesterday, they went out the whole day. He got back when I was already asleep," Karl affirmed, Sapnap's reaction completely throwing him off. "What's up with that reaction?"

"No no, I'm just. Surprised," Sapnap coughed out, and Karl gave him a weird look. "So. George and Minx?"

"I guess so, they seem to like each other," Karl nodded, leaving out how initially he had thought George's crush was Clay. He had been way off.

"That's...great," Sapnap murmured, but before Karl could get a word in he had already turned away to listen as the teacher began giving instructions for the class. Karl's gaze lingered on him for a few more seconds before he turned away too, furrowing his brows in thought.

He couldn't get the sad look he saw in Sapnap's eyes out of his head.



"Help me wake him up, Sap," Karl told him once the bell rang and everyone began filing out of the class. George had stayed asleep the entire period, and Sapnap could have sworn he was mumbling in his sleep at some point.

"Gogy~. Rise and shine, cutie~," Sapnap sang into his ear, shaking him slightly. The Brit didn't show any sign of awakening, so took a deep breath and screamed, "GEORGE!"

George let out a high pitched shriek and nearly fell out of his chair again, except this time, Karl was there to steady him. Sapnap burst out laughing as George looked around in disorientation. Once he seemed to remember where he was, he turned to glare daggers at Sapnap.

"What the hell was that for?" George complained, his voice coming out a bit scratchy as he rubbed his eyes tiredly. Karl helped him stand up from his seat, and Sapnap could tell he was holding back his own laughter. Sapnap shot him an innocent grin.

"I was just waking up my sleeping beauty," Sapnap winked, to which George rolled his eyes, though it was obvious he was now holding back a smile.

"You slept through the whole class, George. I'm surprised the teacher didn't say anything," Karl said in a form of admiration as the three began walking out of the classroom. George stifled a yawn, dragging himself along.

"I didn't even mean to fall asleep. I'm just not used to staying up late," George mumbled out tiredly. He suddenly stopped walking, and grabbed hold of the cuff of Sapnap and Karl's sleeves. "Hold on, wait. Random question."

"What is it, Georgie?" Karl asked, and George turned to him.

"What's Clay's email?"

Sapnap felt his heart stop at the question. He attempted to hide his surprise, but he could practically hear alarms start to go off in his head. Karl merely gave him a confused look.

"Um, I'm not sure. Sap, do you know it?"

"Uh," Sapnap stammered, his mind going blank. He attempted to recover by pretending to think hard on it, and fake suddenly remembering. "Yeah, his email is just his name mashed together with 14 after it I'm pretty sure. And he uses- um...Yahoo."

"Yahoo?" George repeated. Sapnap felt himself begin to sweat.

"Yup. He uses Yahoo," he lied again, forcing a smile.

Truth was, his regular email really was clayblock14 with the @ after, but he didn't use Yahoo. In fact, he hated using Yahoo, had expressed this many times, but if he said he used Gmail, he was scared George might begin to suspect Clay was the one emailing George as Dream.

Which he was, but he had seen how much Clay had been freaking out over the email he had sent as Dream this morning. He wasn't ready for George to find out yet.

And the fact that he was asking for Clay's email already? Not good.

"Oh, do you think he might have another account then?" George asked. Sapnap quickly waved him off.

"No, no, he only ever uses that one email. And even then, he rarely uses it," Sapnap lied again. "Why do you ask?"

"Oh, it's cause I've been getting these emails from someone," George began, and Sapnap was seriously about to get heart problems on Clay's behalf. "I don't know who they are, but it's been bugging me and I'm starting to suspect it might be Clay."

Shit!

"What has he been emailing you about, George?" Karl asked. George let go of his hold on them and started walking again, Sapnap and Karl trailing close behind.

"I don't know if it really is Clay, though, it's just my suspicion. It could be a girl for all I know."

"Or an enby," Karl added, and George nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, but I don't know. I'm starting to connect some dots, and it's making me think more and more that Dream might be Clay."

"Dream?"

"Yeah, the emailer goes by the name 'Dream.' And they always email me about like, my day and stuff."

"Sounds more like a secret admirer," Karl whistled, and Sapnap wanted him to shut up so bad.

"What?!" George squeaked, and Sapnap was surprised to see his face had flushed pink. "No, they're not a secret admirer! I just said that Clay might be Dream, and he definitely doesn't like me like that."

Haha, right...definitely.

"But what if he does though? What would you do, huh?" Karl teased, poking George's shoulder and stirring another reaction out of him.

"Stop it, Karl. He doesn't," George huffed stubbornly, beginning to walk faster in an attempt to hide his red face, though it was too late for that now. Karl was giggling at his reaction, clearly finding it amusing, but Sapnap felt a prick of hope.

He wouldn't be reacting this way if he truly liked Minx, right? Maybe Clay still had a shot...

"You've been kind of quiet. What're you thinking about?" Karl pulled him out of his thoughts, gently placing his hand on Sapnap's shoulder. Sapnap felt his heart immediately speed up at the small action, feeling an overwhelming affection when he turned to look at the boy's worried gaze. He turned back to address George.

"I was just thinking, I don't think it's Clay."

"What?" George stopped walking, caught off guard by Sapnap's firm response. He felt bad lying to George, but he wasn't going to back down now. If Clay had the tiniest shot at George feeling the same way, Sapnap was going to make sure he wouldn't be the one to ruin it by outing Clay when he wasn't ready.

"I've known him since we were kids, and he wouldn't do something like that and not tell you it's him. Plus, he would have told me if he was trying to prank you or something, and he hasn't. Trust me, it's not Clay sending those emails."

George might hate him in the future, but if he was given the opportunity, he would lie for Clay time and time again. He would do whatever it took to cover for his best friend, and he hoped George would be able to understand at least that when he eventually found out the truth.

"Oh...okay," George responded, his expression unreadable. He turned away and kept walking, and Sapnap caught a glimpse of emotion in his eyes.

He seemed...disappointed.

Sapnap felt Karl's gaze on him and he turned to meet his eye, nearly freezing at the calculating

look he was giving him. He felt himself begin to panic.

Was he able to tell he was lying? Did he figure out the truth?

"Hold on, Sap," Karl spoke up, grabbing his wrist so he would stop walking. "George, you go on ahead, I'll catch up."

"Alright," George responded, giving the two a confused look before continuing on to his next class. Karl turned his attention back at Sapnap, and once George was out of earshot, he asked.

"Why did you ask me for George's email that one time?"

Sapnap had completely forgotten he had been the one to ask for Clay. "I wanted to send him the syllabus, remember?"

"And did you?"

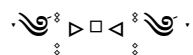
Sapnap's mouth snapped shut. Was this a trick question? Did he know he never did? He opted for the truth this time. "I didn't. I actually forgot about asking you about his email until now."

Karl stared at him for a few seconds, and he felt himself break into a sweat under his unconvinced gaze, silently praying he bought it. Karl finally sighed and nodded, letting go of his hold on Sapnap's wrist.

"Alrighty then, I believe you," Karl smiled a bit, making Sapnap feel a stab of guilt. "I'll see you later, but we still need to talk, okay?" Karl faked a scowl as he shoved his shoulder lightly. Sapnap returned the gesture, making Karl's grin break through.

"Alright, Karl. See you," Sapnap responded with a grin, and as he watched Karl walk off to his class, he felt the smile drop.

He hated lying to Karl the most.



Karl knew Sapnap was lying.

And as he walked away from him, he was almost certain of who Dream truly was.



As George hurried away from Sapnap and Karl and made his way to class, he made two startling realizations.

He must have known before this, but he had been so deep in denial, the realization still came like a slap to the face to George.

One, he had wanted Clay to be Dream so bad, and the confirmation that he wasn't had come as a huge disappointment.

And two, the realization that had felt like a bucket of ice cold water thrown over his head and scorching flames making his insides turn to mush at the same time was this:

He had a crush on Clay.

## Chapter End Notes

hi

this is a double update dudes, strap yourselves in for the next chapter and don't say I didn't warn you. should be out in a couple of minutes!

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 20

## Chapter Summary

\*\*\*TW for this chapter: anxiety attack\*\*\*

this one is more detailed, so please skip over it if it's one of your triggers. a short summary of it will be provided in the endnote if anyone needs it.

skip starting from the  
it ends at the second

stay safe everyone <3

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Show me an email Dream has sent you," Karl said suddenly. He and George were in the middle of class working on a calculus assignment, and George was caught off guard by the request. They hadn't talked about the emails since George had left Sapnap and Karl in the hall before class, and when Karl had walked into class some time later, he hadn't brought it up.

Karl had actually been pretty quiet the whole class period, which was unlike him.

"I don't have my laptop with me," George said, and Karl tapped at George's phone that he had set on his table next to his work.

"You can download the app and check your email, you know."

"Oh," George said. He didn't know why he hadn't thought of doing that before. "Okay, one second."

George downloaded the Gmail app and signed in, and after a few moments, he was back to staring at the single unopen email he still had from Dream. For some reason, the email didn't scare him as much anymore, now that he knew it wasn't from Clay.

Weird.

"You have a new email from them," Karl pointed out when he glanced at his screen. George nodded.

"Yeah, I know. I had noticed it this morning, they had sent it last night at like 1 in the morning. I just haven't opened it yet. It had me freaked out before, but we can read it together now, if you want."

"Why did it have you freaked out before?" Karl asked curiously. George pointed at the subject of the email.

"The subject says 'I have a confession to make.' And their emails don't have subjects, like, ever, so it freaked me out."



"Why aren't you still freaked out then?"

"Because I know for a fact that it's not from Clay now," George responded easily without much thought. Karl gave him a confused look.

"It freaked you out only when you thought it was a confession from Clay?" Karl summarized, looking at George for confirmation, and it took a moment for George to process his words. When he finally realized what he had just let slip a moment prior, he felt his face burn up instantly.

Shit, shit, shit-

"Uh, well it's cause. When I thought it might be from Clay, I was like- worried, it was an actual confession or, or something, n-not that I'm saying it is, or that he would confess to me because he doesn't like me like that, obviously, but if it was I didn't want it to uh, make things awkward between us so...you know..." George trailed off, feeling his heart pounding insistently in his ears. He held his breath as Karl watched him closely for a few seconds.

"So you're saying, and tell me if I got this wrong, if Dream was Clay, you were worried this email would be an actual confession and it could put a strain on your friendship."

"Yes," George confirmed a bit too quickly.

"But now that you know it's not, it doesn't worry you what the email says?"

"Yup," George nodded. Technically it wasn't a complete lie, since he really wasn't super concerned what the email's confession was now that he knew it wasn't Clay confessing something.

He just didn't specify that he had actually wanted it to be Clay confessing.

"Makes sense. So let's read what it says," Karl grinned, before his smile dropped. "Unless you don't want to show me. Don't worry about showing me, it could actually be something personal."

"No, no, it's fine, you can see. I've been meaning to read it, actually," George reassured him. Karl scooted his chair beside George's and leaned in to get a better look of the screen just as George tapped the email open.

They both read it.

Dream  
to georgenotfound@gmail.com

Dear George,

It's like 1 in the morning but I can't sleep, and it's your fault. Thus I'm writing this email to you, so you can share my pain.

I have a confession to make, George.

I can't stop thinking about you.

Has anyone ever told you what a good person you are? You're the best, George. You care so much for all of your friends, you keep their secrets, you are always there for them. You've made it clear

in your emails that you care a lot, even if you may not outright say it, you show it.

You're also smart as hell! I heard a teacher talking about you some time ago, and she was saying you had straight A's and won a bunch of academic awards and did other nerdy stuff back in the UK. Holy cow dude, you're hot, a good person, and smart on top of that?? What the hell, who let God give you the whole package, at least leave something for the rest of us LMAO

You hold so many admirable traits, that every time I find a new one, I tell myself, "there's no way anyone can get better than this." And then you proceed to prove me wrong! Seriously, how are you this perfect??

Okay, I know you're not actually perfect. Nobody is. Everyone is bound to mess up at some point. But you're the type of person that would own up to your mistakes and apologize, and try to reconcile in any way you could. Even if it wasn't your fault, you would probably still be the one to apologize (dummy), because that's just how you are. And that's something I really admire. You're a good person. Too good, in fact. One day someone is going to take advantage of you, George. Learn to be mean once in a while (LOL jk don't listen to me I'm a bad influence)

To be honest, even though I tried convincing myself I sent you that first email as a dumb prank to mess with you, and for my own entertainment, the truth is, I was curious about you. About what type of person you were. You made quite the first impression on me, so I wanted to figure you out, behind the mask of anonymity. And your response was hilarious, straight to the point, as you usually tend to be. Your responses to my dumb emails were so painfully dry but it was so funny-oh, that's another thing. You're funny?? On top of everything else, you have a sense of humor??? Seriously, favoritism from the gods.

Once I realized what was going on, I was too far gone. There was no going back. I knew, it was all downhill from here, and I wouldn't be able to plant my feet and stop my fall.

I feel I am going to regret sending this. Am I even going to send this to you? You know what, I'm up at an unholy hour, I'm sleep deprived and I'll blame it on my late night delusions. Time to be impulsive and end up regretting it in the morning.

I hope you realize how much you mean to people, and the impact you have on them. You've surely impacted me, in the best way possible, and you may never know all that you've done for me. Thank you for coming to America, giving me the opportunity to have met you, and for allowing me to be your friend.

Love,  
Dream

Reply      Forward

"Oh my god that was adorable," Karl whispered as the two finished reading the whole email. George knew his face was probably bright red as he dropped the phone and covered his face in his hands. "Awe, George! You're blushing!"

"Shut up," George mumbled as he dragged his hand down his face, glancing at his phone. "What in the world...I wasn't expecting that at all."

"They got you spot on, not gonna lie," Karl said as he grabbed the phone, scrolling through the

email again. His eyebrows furrowed in thought. "But..."

George dropped his hands and looked at Karl. "But?"

"This kind of seemed like a...love confession?" Karl glanced back at him, gauging his reaction. George blinked.

"Did it?"

Karl nodded, turning to look back at the email. There was an almost...longing look in his eyes. "I mean, they were confessing they couldn't stop thinking about you, and then they went on to write like 50 paragraphs about how amazing you are..."

"Well, yeah, but you could say that about a friend, right? It could have just been an appreciation email for your..." George trailed off at Karl's 'are you stupid' look. "...or not."

"Yeah, not like this. They sound like they have a massive crush on you."

George leaned his head on his hand, feeling a bit sheepish about it. He pushed away the disappointing thought that Clay hadn't been the one to write that email, after all. "You think so?"

"Yeah, definitely," Karl nodded, his expression suddenly unreadable. "But if you're still not sure, you should ask."

"Ask?"

"Yeah, respond to the email asking them if they meant it to be in a 'you're my homie and I think you're pretty sweet' way or in a 'I want to have sex with you' way."

"Karl!" George slapped his arm, his face flushing again as Karl burst out into a fit of giggles at his embarrassed reaction.

"Seriously, the only way you'll know is if you ask," Karl insisted once he had calmed down, sliding the phone back to George. He stared at it, pursing his lip in thought.

It couldn't hurt to try, right?

He began typing out a response, Karl giving him some pointers.

George  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

thank you Dream, I really appreciate you taking the time to express that :] but I had to ask, was that a love confession just now? lol

"That's such an awkward response," George sighed, considering deleting the message and starting over. "They just poured their heart out and I'm responding in two lines. Shouldn't I say something else? Like, about Dream's qualities, or something?" Karl shook his head.

"You need to find out where Dream stands first. If this was a love confession, and you go and respond with something sappy, they may get the wrong idea and think the feelings are reciprocated, and you would be leading them on."

George stared down at the typed out message. Karl was right. "So I just send it like this? I still feel bad."

Karl nudged his shoulder lightly, giving him an encouraging grin. "Hey, if they say they were just being friendly, you can shower them with compliments right back. But by then, you will know you won't be leading them on, because that would only make things worse if you did, you know?"

"I guess," George said.

"So send this, and see what they say, then go from there."

George stared at the send button, the different outcomes that could possibly come from this single email filling his mind.

He took a deep breath and pressed send.



Clay nearly dropped his phone when he got the notification.

He had his phone under his table pretending to be listening to the lecture but actually scrolling through Twitter when he got a new email notification.

From George.

He looked back up to make sure the teacher hadn't noticed before clicking on the notification with shaky hands. His heart was pounding in his ears as he bit his lip nervously. It pulled up on his screen, and he stared at it.

It was a two sentence response.

Clay had to stifle a snort behind his hand. The email was short and to the point, and it was such a George thing to do that he couldn't help but grin all goofily at it.

But how should he respond to that? Should he tell him the truth? Brush it off as just friendly compliments? George had given him a window of opportunity to take it back, and yet for some reason, he found himself hesitating.

He could laugh it off, pass George's question off as a joke, make it clear to him it wasn't like that at all.

Or he could come clean.

He could tell him the truth. He could take the leap, and hope the fall would be worth it.

Clay's leg was bouncing like crazy as his head throbbed in indecision. Which one was the smart move? Play it safe, and regret not telling him? Or take a chance, and possibly regret telling him the truth?

He stared at the email, and hit reply.

He thought of his conversation with George that morning, of running to class hand in hand, of how he caught George staring at him several times during class, and how he turned red and immediately looked away any time their eyes would meet.

Was there a slight chance that George could possibly...?

Clay made a spur of the moment decision and began typing out his response.

After only a moments hesitation, he held his breath and clicked send.

He took a leap into the abyss.



The response notification came a few moments after.

"That was fast," Karl commented. George hummed as he opened the notification and read the email, secretly anticipating the response.

Dream  
to me

yeah I'm in love with you George how did you know /j

Nah but truth is, I do like you. It was probably obvious in the email haha. I don't want to make things awkward and I don't expect you to reciprocate my feelings, you don't even know who I am irl, but I guess a part of me still hopes you may feel the same way

Feel free to ignore all of this, we can pretend this email never happened. I just felt you should know the truth.

Reply Forward

"Oh," George whispered. He felt himself involuntarily blush at reading the admission. He

should've guessed it but the actual confirmation...he wasn't sure what the right way to react to it was. He felt flattered, sure, and it made him feel a little embarrassed, but he just couldn't return the feelings.

Dream just wasn't him.

"What should I say to this?" George turned to look up at Karl and froze.

He was staring blankly at the phone, his expression devoid of any obvious emotion, but his eyes were watery and a single tear escaped the rest, quickly trailing down the expanse of his face. George's eyes widened at it.

"Karl? What is it, what's wrong??" George asked, concern obvious in his voice. Karl seemed to snap out of his trance, blinking rapidly at George, as if he had completely forgotten the boy was there to begin with. He smiled, laughing a bit as he quickly wiped the tear away.

"Oh, haha, I must have not been blinking. I didn't realize my eyes got watery," Karl choked out quickly as he blinked back the rest of the tears still welling up in his eyes. "I could easily become a pro at staring contests, haha."

George furrowed his brow, staring intently at Karl. His smile didn't seem natural at all and way forced. He also wasn't meeting George's eyes at all.

"Are you-" George was cut off by the bell ringing, signaling the end of class and the start of their lunch period. Everyone in the classroom immediately began getting their things together to leave for lunch, and among the fastest to pack up was Karl. "Karl, wait-"

"I need to talk to Sapnap, so I should go find him now. He might try to avoid me again so I should hurry," Karl forced a smile again, zipping his backpack and hoisting one strap over his shoulder. "See you later, George."

"Ah, hold on-" George started, but by then, Karl was already dashing out of the classroom, not once turning back. George stared at his retreating back with a mix of bafflement and hurt, unable to do much else but watch him go.



Dumbass.

Dumbass dumbass dumbass dumbass.

Why had he started crying? And in front of George??

Now George was worried, and he had left him with only a half assed explanation to go off of, that wasn't even the true reason.

But how was Karl supposed to explain the heartbreak he felt reading that email?

It was obvious in the confession email. It was, Karl had known it from the start, he shouldn't have been surprised by the confirmation.

But imagining it to be true and actually getting a written confirmation of it were two completely different things. Actually reading it had hurt, a lot more than he could have ever imagined. He had practically felt the moment his heart dropped and shattered into a million pieces.

Dream was Sapnap. He had figured it out. He was so sure of it. Even though he wished so badly it weren't true, it made sense!

Sapnap had asked for George's email, saying he was going to send him a syllabus, which he never did.

Instead, he apparently made a separate account and began emailing George as 'Dream.'

He had been giving George a lot of attention since he first showed up at school. They quickly became friends, and Sapnap did flirt with him once in a while.

Karl had thought they were jokes. Apparently they weren't.

He reacted strangely when Karl told him George stayed up late the night before. He asked for the reason.

He must have thought the email he sent him was the reason.

When Karl told Sapnap that George and Minx went out on a date, he had literally spit out his water in shock. And on top of that, when Karl told him they liked each other, he looked upset about it.

Later when George brought up the emails, the entire time, Sapnap looked seconds away from puking. Karl could tell when he was hiding something, and the guy practically panicked any time George addressed him directly or so much as turned his way, as if he would let slip something he shouldn't. He was even so quick to assure that Clay wasn't the emailer, saying it like he knew it for a fact.

Probably because he knew it wasn't Clay, since it was actually Sapnap himself all along.

And then he lied to Karl's face when he asked him directly about asking for George's email. That alone had hurt Karl.

But finding out confirmation that Sapnap liked George? That hurt the most.

He should have realized that Sapnap flirting with him had always been just jokes to him. He should have known that the tension he couldn't explain between them had been one-sided all along.

He should have never been stupid enough to take a picture of him kissing Sapnap's cheek and then running away. It was no wonder Sapnap had been avoiding him the whole day and acting weird around him, not making a single joke with him the entire day. He was probably trying to figure out the best way to let him down slowly.

Karl had been such an idiot.

He felt his eyes burning as he broke off into a run, maneuvering past the crowded halls blindly, bumping into several people as he went. He was about to reach the double doors leading outside of the school when he collided directly into someone, sending the two toppling to the floor.

"I'm so sorry!" Karl said quickly, getting off the person without seeing who it was. He stumbled to his feet and started running again, not turning back to see if the other was alright.

"Karl, wait!"

Oh no.

No no no no not him. Not now.

Once Karl reached the double doors he pushed them open, feeling the air from outside hit his face and make his eyes sting, tears falling down his reddened cheeks. His heart was pounding like crazy, his breathing was coming out short, but he needed to keep running. He needed to get away.

"Karl!" he heard again. Closer this time.

Karl panicked and changed direction, turning left down one side of the school. He wasn't watching where he was going, and that was his mistake.

He reached a dead end where two sections of the building met, at the end of a sort of alley way between the two buildings he hadn't realized he was running down.

He whirled around, his breath catching in his throat as the last person he wanted to see at that moment ran towards him in a place he had nowhere else to go.

"No, no, nonononono-" Karl began mumbling to himself, his back hitting the wall behind him as he slid down it, falling to the floor rather ungraciously. He curled himself into a ball, feeling himself trembling all over. He didn't even want to look up as a shadow fell over him.

"Karl," a voice said softly, gently, as the person knelt down in front of him. Karl looked up at him now, a sort of manic smile slipping onto his face.

"O-Of course it's okay. I'm fine! I'm-I'm alr-" Karl choked on his words, unable to finish as his breathing shortened again. His chest hurt, he felt nauseous, everything was blurry. His head was spinning, he couldn't breathe, he just wanted to leave but he couldn't move.

Hands suddenly grabbed hold of both his shoulders and he flinched. He couldn't stop shaking as he was slowly pulled to his feet, and he stared down at the floor as his tears dropped down to splatter onto the pavement, still feeling as though he was suffocating.

"Karl, I need you to breathe with me," he said. Karl shook his head quickly as he felt warm hands grabbed hold of his trembling ones. "C'mon, let's count to ten, alright? Ten deep breathes, do it with me."

"I can't," Karl barely managed to choke out. He couldn't breathe. His chest was tightening. He couldn't-

"You can, alright? This will pass, Karl. Remember that. It'll soon be over. Now try taking deep breaths with me."

He started counting his breaths up to ten slowly, and Karl tried taking in deep breaths to match with



his. They were a bit strangled at first, but as they got closer to ten, his breathing was getting better, and he was able to take in more gentle and deeper breaths, air filling his lungs once more.

"Good, Karl. You're doing great," he spoke gently, his voice washing over him like a serene wave, calming, his hands squeezing Karl's a bit in reassurance. Karl nodded briefly, continuing to take deep breaths as he shut his eyes tightly. He could still feel himself trembling, and his head was still spinning, but he felt slightly better than a moment prior.

"Is it alright if I hug you?"

Karl nodded. He felt the warm hands escape his grip and his heart rate piqued again, but then arms were wrapping around his frame and bringing him in closely, and he let himself drop his head onto the other's shoulder. He took a long, deep breath through his nose and exhaled deeply through his mouth as he wrapped his own arms around the other's frame. He felt himself being rocked gently, and he kept his eyes closed as he focused on the movement.

"I'm sorry," Karl mumbled once he was able to speak again. The arms around him tightened.

"You have nothing to apologize for, Karl."

"I made you worry."

"I care about you, dummy, so obviously I'm going to worry. And that's not your fault."

Karl remained silent as he held onto the other, his face still buried in the crook between his neck and shoulder. He was probably making his white hoodie wet with his tears.

"Thank you, Nick," he whispered. Sapnap didn't say anything in response and instead began to rub comforting circles into his back. "Hey Sap?"

"Yeah, Karl?"

"Can we forget what happened last Friday? After the game, right before I had left?"

Sapnap froze for a second before proceeding to draw stars and other shapes into Karl's back. "Sure. We can forget it."

Karl felt himself deflate at his words, the last of his worries oozing out of him.

It was going to be okay. They were still going to be friends, and they would forget Karl's mistake like it never happened. Things would go back to the way they were before, and Karl would work to move on from Sapnap from then on.

He was glad.

"Okay," Karl whispered as more tears welled up in his eyes and slipped down his face silently. He tightened his hold on Sapnap, burying his face deeper into his shoulder.

He was glad.



"Have any of you seen Sappap?" Clay asked inside of the locker room as his teammates began to change to run some quick drills and get a bit of practice in during their lunch break. They had just won a game the Friday before, but their coach was relentless, so the boys on the team didn't complain. Besides, though it was technically optional, most of the boys usually showed up for it.

"I'm surprised he's not with you," Techno spoke up from the floor where he was tightening his shoelaces. Clay looked around the room, and everyone else said they hadn't seen him come in.

"That's weird. He's never missed practice during lunch before," Clay spoke mostly to himself as he opened his locker.

"Maybe he wasn't feeling up to it this time. I almost skipped out on practice myself," Schlatt admitted offhandedly as he gathered his clothes and shoved them into his locker. He was nudged by Weston, a shorter, blonde boy also on the team that he seemed to be close with.

"Is your heart still hurting, big guy?" Weston asked teasingly. Schlatt nodded solemnly.

"Always. It's been torn to a million pieces. Shredded, actually, in a very vicious manner."

"Why is your heart hurting?" Skeppy spoke up curiously. Schlatt faked a swoon, falling into Weston's expecting arms.

"I feel betrayed. Heart broken."

"Quit being dramatic and get to the point," Techno suddenly demanded, apparently curious as well. Schlatt stood up straight at that, squinting down to where he was still tying his shoelaces.

"Techno, you still terrify the shit out of me."

"Thank you."

"I suppose I'll tell you all stories of woe," Schlatt exclaimed dramatically, making most of the boys still changing turn to pay attention to him. "I caught Minx out on a date with another man."

Several of the guys gasped and burst out in exclamations of surprise as Schlatt solemnly nodded at them. Techno seemed completely unfazed as he drawled out, "You and Minx aren't together, so what does it matter."

"I know, I know, but still! The betrayal I felt seeing her with another before my own two eyes! It was too much on this poor heart!" Schlatt continued on in faux sorrow.

"Oh, shut up, you big baby. We both know you don't actually care this much," Weston laughed and nudged Schlatt again, Schlatt returning the gesture a bit more roughly.

"What do you know, Weston," he shot back with no real heat.

"Who was she on a date with?" Ranboo spoke up next, leaning forward a bit, apparently captivated by Schlatt's dumb theatrics.

"Oh, she was with that short British guy. The really pretty one. What's his name again?" Schlatt began, and Clay felt his heart drop.

"George?" he blurted out in surprise, and Schlatt turned to him and snapped his finger, nodding.

"Yes, George, that one. I mean, I can't exactly blame her, the guy is incredibly good looking. I would take him on a date, too."

"George was on a date with Minx?" Clay repeated. He could hear blood rushing in his ears, suddenly feeling sick. "When?"

"Yesterday. I caught her running around with him outside of a karaoke place. I think she was trying to hide from me, but I still saw her. It was pretty hilarious that her plan failed so miserably," Schlatt let out a loud cackle, but Clay didn't feel like laughing.

"Do they like each other?" Clay asked, dreading the answer.

"Probably," Schlatt nodded, and Clay's heart sank. "Minx tried to hide it from me, but I'm pretty sure she's had a crush on him since the party. And if George was willing to hang out a whole day with that woman, then he must really like her," Schlatt laughed again like it wasn't a big deal, when it felt like the complete opposite to Clay.

In a matter of moments, his entire world had been flipped upside down. He had begun to think that maybe, just maybe, George felt the same way, and he had done something really stupid because of it. No wonder George hadn't responded to his latest email yet, the guy was probably trying to figure out the best way to reject him!

George didn't like him. He liked Minx. He went on a date with her, of course he wouldn't like Clay! And yet he had been stupid enough to think, even for a split second, that he had a chance, when the reality was he never had one to begin with.

He felt his hands begin to tremble as his thoughts spiraled out of control. He had fucked up. He had taken that stupid leap, and plummeted directly into concrete.

"...I'm going to go find Sapnap, so tell the coach I won't make it today," Clay spoke up, turning to gather his things quickly and slam his locker shut. There was an echo of goodbyes as he made a beeline for the door, walking out of the locker room and back out of the school building.

He felt his phone buzz in his pocket, and he retrieved it to see a notification.

A new email from George.

He gritted his teeth and shoved his phone back into his pocket as he stormed away, not entirely sure where he was going. He had said he was going to look for Sapnap, but the truth was he had just needed an excuse to leave. His mind was spiraling, and he continued walking aimlessly in an attempt to calm himself down.

He rounded a corner and spotted two figures standing in front of one of the pair of double doors leading inside. He didn't pay much attention to them until he got a bit closer and realized who they were.

Purple haired girl. Thin brunette guy.

He felt his heart stop as he turned on his heel and sprinted back the way he came, rounding the corner and pressing his back against the wall, praying he hadn't been seen.

His heart was drumming in his ears as he tried to get his breathing back under control, and after a few moments he peeked around the corner to see the pair still standing there, talking to each other.

He watched as Minx shoved George's shoulder teasingly, the other rubbing the back of his neck in a sheepish manner, his face looking a bit flushed. George said something to her, and Minx laughed.

Clay could see George's smile clear as day from where he stood.

He turned away, unable to watch them for a moment longer, his heart thrumming painfully in his chest. He turned on his heel and walked back the way he came, away from Minx and George.

Mindlessly, he whipped his phone back out, turning it on and staring at the email notification. As he kept walking, he tapped on it, pulling up the email, and read it silently.

George  
to dreamwastaken@gmail.com

I really am flattered, you've been nothing but nice to me since I got here from the UK and I really do enjoy talking to you. I already like someone else, though, so I'm afraid I can't return your feelings. I really am sorry, I'm sure you will find your person, and they will give you the happiness you deserve. I hope we can still continue to be friends.

Reply Forward

Clay felt the tears begin to spill, his vision going blurry as he let out a humorless laugh at the email. He wiped at his eyes in frustration, but they only continued to well up with no sign of stopping. Without realizing it, he had walked up to the hedge maze behind the school, and he stood now blankly staring at it.

He walked in, maneuvering through the maze with ease and reaching the middle fairly quickly. He slowly walked into the greenhouse at the center of it, not even sparing a glance at the butterflies dancing around him inside. He made his way to one bench in particular and sat down.

Clay sat there in silence before he let out a broken sob, his hand coming up to cover his mouth, though it did little to stifle it. His body curled forward as it was wracked with sobs, big, fat tears rolling down his cheeks.

Fuck.

Curled up on the bench he had been with George only a couple of days prior, Clay cried amongst the rainbow of colors from the greenery around him, a waltz of dozens of exotic and multicolored butterflies fluttering gracefully above his head.

It was a shame he wasn't able to appreciate it, though, as his world had suddenly turned dull and

devoid of color.

## Chapter End Notes

\*waves white flag\* have mercy please

For those that skipped over the anxiety attack bit, here's the summary of that portion:

Sapnap had been the one Karl rammed into, so he chases after Karl, making him panic. Karl feels cornered and has a sort of anxiety attack, and Sapnap is the one that helps calm him down and get him through it.

It really wasn't much, but I wanted to include the warning at the start of the chapter because this one was a little more detailed than past borderline attacks characters have had. If you read it, I hope I was able to portray it accurately, but if I didn't, I apologize!

Anyways, that's all for now. I'm not sure when the next update will be out, but I'll try to get to work on it as soon as I can!

As always, remember to take breaks from your phones, eat your meals, and stay hydrated everyone! Love you guys so much, please take care!

- Kirbs -

# Chapter 21

## Chapter Summary

just a bunch of wholesome bestie moments tbh

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Oi Gogy, you don't look too swell, mate," Tommy spoke up as George slowly trudged towards the group waiting for him, sidestepping the people walking to and fro the hallway surrounding him. George spared him a glance, rubbing at his eye tiredly as he finally reached the three boys standing in front of a set of lockers.

"I didn't sleep well last night."

"You sure do look like you haven't slept in eons," Tubbo added, before letting out a soft oof when Wilbur nudged him. "What? What did I say?"

"You said nothing wrong, Tubbo. Speak your truth. Ignore the freakishly tall man," Tommy patted Tubbo's back firmly before Wilbur swatted his head next. "Hey!"

"So where are we eating today?" George cut in before the bickering could escalate, like it usually tended to with those two. Just as Wilbur opened his mouth to respond, Tubbo cut him off.

"Actually, I'm going to be eating with a friend today," Tubbo stated matter-of-factly, and Tommy whirled to stare at him in astonishment and borderline betrayal.

"Wot?! With who??"

"You know the guy you picked a fight with during class just because he was taller than you? He's taking me to Applebees," Tubbo grinned at Tommy, and George vaguely remembered Tommy arguing with a guy during one of their shared classes and assumed that was who he meant. Tommy let out an offended gasp.

"I fucking swear to prime- that man- first he dares say I'm not 6'3 when I really am by the way and now he proceeds to steal my best friend through the means of food?! What even is an 'applebees' anyway?!" Tommy complained loudly to Wilbur and George as if Tubbo weren't standing right beside him. "The audacity of that man- that manipulative son of a bitch I ought to fight him-"

"You are not fighting Ranboo. And who's stealing who? I can have more than one best friend, you know. Not like it's illegal," Tubbo countered, crossing his arms.

"Yeah, Tommy. I thought I was your best friend, too," Wilbur cut in with an amused grin. Tommy turned on him next, scrunching his nose.

"No, no, Tubbo is my best mate. You, Wilbur- it's different with you. We're like brothers, you and I."

Wilbur's smile dropped, and he sniffed a bit. "Don't say that, I will cry."

"Yeah, yeah, anyways," Tommy turned back towards Tubbo to jab a finger at his chest, leveling him with a glare. "Don't leave with that guy or I'll kick his arse."

"Who's ass are we kicking here?" an unfamiliar voice asked. George turned around to find the owner of it, and had to look up just to see the guy's face. He was the boy he had seen arguing with Tommy during class, and George was shocked when he noticed he had two different colored eyes, though he couldn't see the actual shades. Tommy looked seconds away from lunging at the guy.

"Yours! I'm kicking your ass because how dare you steal Tubbo from me and take him to eat to some shitty American restaurant you dickhead-" Tommy continued spouting profanities at him, and the guy with heterochromia looked to be debating whether Tommy really posed a threat to him or not. Tubbo let out an exasperated sigh as he shouldered past Tommy and his theatrics.

"Ignore him, Ran. Let's go already, I'm starving," Tubbo went up to the guy, whom George assumed was Ranboo, and started tugging him away. "Bye, Tommy! Bye, everyone!" he shouted behind him, Ranboo giving the group a sheepish smile and waving goodbye before letting himself be led away. As the two got swallowed up by the crowds of people filling the hall, Tommy yelled after them.

"What the fuck, fine! Leave! I'll just hang out with my best bud Gogy here," Tommy moved to George's side to wrap an arm around his shoulder.

"Since when do you call me 'Gogy,' anyway? How did you even know about that?" George had to ask. Tommy patted George's back, letting out a snicker.

"Your new American friends come up with amusing nicknames, I'll give them that."

"Have you two seen Niki, by any chance?" Wilbur spoke up suddenly, and George watched him glance around at the groups of people passing by them. Both George and Tommy shook their heads. "Where do you think she might be?"

"I can go look for her, if you guys want," George offered. Tommy gave him a concerned once-over.

"No offense, big man, but you look seconds away from passing out, so I don't think you going off on your own and getting all lost and shit would be the smartest move," Tommy said. George felt his brows furrow.

"I'm fine. Really," he insisted stubbornly, ignoring the way he felt his body sway from exhaustion. "Besides, I need to talk to Minx and Niki is likely with her," George added as an afterthought. He ignored the teasing he expected from Tommy, but was surprised when Wilbur didn't join in and instead remained silent, taking out his phone to read something on the screen.

"George was right, Niki is with Minx," Wilbur spoke up after a moment, turning his phone around to show them her text message. "They're going to eat lunch together today. Want me to tell her you're looking for Minx?"

"Sure, if that's alright with her," George nodded. Wilbur typed something away, and then after a few moments showed George Niki's response.

"Where is this?" George asked, looking at the message Niki had sent saying they were at the west entrance to the school. Wilbur pointed down the hallway to his left, and George thanked him before taking off in that direction without another word.

"So will it just be the two of us today, then?" he heard Tommy ask Wilbur as he walked away from them.

"Unfortunately," George heard Wilbur drawl just before he was completely out of earshot, making a grin slip onto his features.

George maneuvered his way down the hall, sidestepping the crowds of people walking to and from it. He hoped he was arriving at the correct door when he spotted a set of double doors some ways ahead of him, leading outside of the building and to the front patio.

He got his answer when he reached it and pushed one of the doors open just as someone was walking up to it on the other side, nearly slamming them in the face with it.

"Hey, watch it!" an all too familiar Irish accent scolded him loudly.

"Minx!" George squeaked in surprise, hurrying out the door and letting it swing shut behind him. "Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry, I didn't know you were on the other side- did the door hit you?"

"George," Minx blurted out, her eyes big as she finally realized who had nearly been the cause of a nasty injury. "No, no, I'm fine, I stepped out of the way just in time. But Jesus Christ, George, you almost killed me back there."

"Sorry," George said sheepishly, before remembering his mission. "I was actually looking for you because I wanted to talk to you. I thought you were with Niki?" George glanced around, taking in the trees lining the pathways in front of the school building and spotting a few students walking about, none of which were Niki.

"I was with her a second ago but she went in to look for something she left in class. You didn't see her?" George shook his head as Minx hummed. "I see. Yeah, she should be out in a second, but in the meantime you wanted to talk to me?"

"Yes. Yeah. It's about," George paused, his eyes darting away from Minx's. He didn't know why he suddenly felt awkward, his mind flashing back to where he stood outside Karl's front door, saying goodbye to Minx at the end of their date last night, and what almost happened between them. His hand subconsciously came up to scratch his neck as he finished, "About yesterday."

Minx patiently waited for him to continue, so he steeled his nerves and tried to explain himself. "Um, I'm sorry about how our date ended. I felt bad, you know, just leaving you hanging like that. I like you Minx, and I had a super fun day, but I just- I don't know. When it came to it, I just couldn't-" George stopped himself, clearing his throat awkwardly as he looked away from her again. "I'm sorry I was the one to ruin it."

Minx stared at him for a second in silence, her expression unreadable, until a knowing smile broke onto her face and she crossed her arms over her chest. "It's okay George, you don't need to explain yourself. Like I said last night, we're better off as friends anyway. I know you don't like me."

"I- what?" George responded dumbly, whipping his gaze back at Minx, who had caught him off guard with her offhanded response. Her smile shifted into an amused grin, looking at him almost softly.

"You don't like me George, I can tell. Well, you like me, sure, but you don't like me, like me," Minx explained for him, before smiling cockily. "Any motherfucker that liked me wouldn't have been able to resist me. I mean c'mon, I'm smokin'. A full course meal. I would make out with me."



"Whatever helps you sleep at night," George quipped jokingly, making Minx punch his shoulder lightly, a soft laugh escaping his lips.

"Asshole," she grumbled with a smile, before lightly flicking his forehead. "And don't flatter yourself so much. Really, it didn't affect me as much as you may think it did. I was a bit relieved, actually, because it made things way easier for me."

"Easier how?" George asked, not exactly following. Minx's smile grew wide, her eyes sparkling with a secret.

"Let's just say you're not the only person I fancy at the moment," she said with a wink. George tilted his head to one side.

"Schlatt?"

"Ew, no," Minx responded automatically, making George bark out a laugh in surprise. "Never tell him I said that. But no, it's not Schlatt."

"Then who?" George insisted, his curiosity growing with every passing second. Minx glanced around at their surroundings before signaling for him to get closer, and as she leaned in next to his ear, she whispered.

"That's for me to know and you to figure out."

"Woow," George drawled as Minx leaned back away with a smile. "C'mon, you know I won't tell anyone."

"Then...would you be willing to make an exchange for it?" she grinned wider still, something almost devilish flashing in her expression. George should've known better than to agree, the girl clearly had a plan in mind, but he knew if he didn't find out now it would only gnaw at his brain later.

"I feel like I'll regret this later but...sure. What do you want to exchange for it?" he humored her, biting back a smile as she brought a hand up to her chin in faux thinking.

"How about we make a fair exchange? An eye for an eye?" she started, the corner of her lips slowly quirking upwards. "I tell you my crush, and you tell me yours?"

George felt his heart stutter in surprise. He attempted to swallow past the knot forming in his throat as he forced out, "I don't have a crush."

"Mhm, okay," Minx responded, sounding unconvinced.

"I'm serious, I don't like anyone," George insisted, lying again. Minx's smile seemed to soften the slightest bit.

"And I said okay, you're the one insisting so much you don't, dumb-dumb. Are you trying to convince me or yourself?" Minx responded cleverly, and George didn't know what to say to that. "I won't force it out of you, but at least don't lie to yourself. I saw it clear as day that you liked someone else when we hung out yesterday, so I wasn't caught off guard by how our date ended. I kind of expected it, really."

"I'm not lying to myself..." George responded stubbornly, before his brain caught up with the end of Minx's statement. "Wait, what are you talking about?"

Minx stared at him for a few seconds before she let out a soft, breathy laugh. "George, you don't seem the type to wear your heart on your sleeve, but I could see it clear as day anytime you talked about him."

George froze.

Him?

"H-How?" he stammered out, feeling his face warm up at an alarming rate.

She knew.

She knew before George even realized it himself.

Was he really that obvious?

"I like to think I've got a pretty good gaydar. Or at least, I can recognize my own people," Minx smiles softly, as if she were sharing a secret with him. And in a way, she was.

"You're-?"

"I'm pansexual. Dudes, gals, non-binary pals, the whole sort, I love em all," she confirmed, and somehow, this revelation let a small wave of calm wash over him, and his heart rate began to slow to a steady rhythm.

"I see," he responded, and he realized this was the second time today he found out one of his friends liked the same gender in some way.

Was this the universe's way of telling him that he wasn't alone? That he was, after all, normal- no matter who his heart desired? For some reason, his brain hadn't registered this fact before, but this realization made him feel more secure with himself than he's ever felt.

His internal battle seemed to finally be reaching its end- one he hadn't even realized he had been fighting.

"So hey, if you want to talk about it, I'm here. I completely understand you, George," Minx shoved his shoulder lightly. George rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly.

"Thanks Minx, and my radar- or what did you call it? Gaydar? It must be terrible since I didn't realize you liked girls, and you realized I liked a guy before I even did," he smiled a bit in embarrassment as Minx threw her head back in a laugh.

"Oh my god- you actually didn't know?? When did you realize?" Minx leaned forward, and George couldn't help but feel her giddiness rubbing off on him, a wide smile on his face making his cheeks hurt.

"This is really embarrassing but...this morning."

Minx burst out in cackles again, doubling over with the force of her laughter as George let out an exasperated sigh. "Hey, I was in denial, okay?"

"No, no, it's totally fine, George, I understand- some people don't realize until years later that the feelings they felt were romantic, so it's normal," Minx let out once she had calmed down her laughter a bit, carefully wiping away the tears forming at the corner of her eyes. "I'm proud of you for realizing eventually, at least."

"Me too," George responded, and he didn't realized his voice had come out fond or his face had softened with it until he saw Minx giving him a sly look, making his cheeks heat up immediately. "Shut up."

"Didn't say a word," she giggled, before walking to his side and hooking her arm through his. "Now come on, lover boy, let's go find Niki. Hopefully she didn't get lost on her way back."

As the two walked back in through the double doors, Minx leaned in a bit to his side and asked softly, "Do you plan on telling Clay?"

George felt his heart stutter at his mere name, his face flushing as he thought of what he saw as golden eyes and dirty blonde locks that looked almost golden under the rays of the sun, his smile a fierce competitor of the sun itself that could easily rival even the brightest of stars.

He knew, deep down, that he would never be able to deserve such a kind smile, such a sweet and caring person. Clay deserved the universe in its entirety, and who was George to ever be able to be that for him?

"No. I won't tell him," he decided, and though it hurt to admit out loud, he also felt a sort of peace when the words were finally out of his mouth, his heart knowing this was the right decision. "He couldn't ever like me back, and even if he did, I'll be gone in 6 months. I couldn't do that to him. He deserves someone who will be able to stay by his side, not someone who will be living a whole ocean away."

He met Minx's sad gaze, but her eyes held a level of understanding as she nodded. "It's your decision, George. If it's what you think is best, then I won't be one to stop you."

George smiled at her in thanks as they turned a corner, and the two dropped the conversation in favor of continuing their search for Niki.



"Remember that time we went to that McDonald's near your house-"

"And we demanded to see the soft serve machine because we didn't believe it was broken?" Karl finished with a giggle, his feet swinging under him as he turned to flash Sapnap a beautiful smile. "Oh my god, that was so funny, of course I remember!"

"I can't believe you forced your way past the lady at the front desk like that and got us banned from ever setting foot there," Sapnap barked out a laugh as he recalled the memory.

"Yeah- hey, wait no, you were the one that did that!" Karl refuted, his eyebrows screwing together in confusion. Sapnap leaned back a bit and pretended to think hard, pursing his lips.

"Hmm, nope. Pretty sure it was your fault."

"No, it had been you! I remember because when the lady said it was broken, you slammed your

hand on the front desk and yelled at her which had startled me so bad, and then you just went and walked to the back and forced your way past her to see it for yourself-" Karl cut off when he realized Sapnap's shoulders were shaking with laughter, and he gasped as he hit his shoulder playfully. "You were pretending to not remember, I hate you!"

"No you don't," Sapnap responded automatically, and he saw the second Karl's smile dropped. But just as quickly as it was gone, the smile was back, though it did little to halt the churning starting up again in Sapnap's stomach.

"Whatever, it's your fault I'm banned from there," Karl stuck his tongue out at him playfully. Sapnap snickered, and he watched the moment Karl hesitated for a second before giving in and resting his head on Sapnap's shoulder. Sapnap froze at the contact, turning slightly to peer down at Karl's mess of brown hair.

"Is this okay?" Karl asked in a soft voice, and Sapnap felt his heart drum painfully against his chest. He wanted to pull him closer to him so badly, but the fact that Karl was hesitant to make even small contact like this, which before was like second nature to them, he knew Karl probably wouldn't react positively to it. So instead, he merely nodded slightly, feeling as Karl relaxed a bit more against him, drawing the slightest inch closer to his side.

"Thank you, Sap. For helping me calm down," Karl murmured, and Sapnap was unable to resist the urge this time, slowly moving to wrap an arm around the taller boy's shoulder. He stiffened for a second against him, but after a few seconds he was relaxed against his side again.

"Of course, Karl. You don't even need to thank me," Sapnap responded, staring out at the trees ahead of them. The two were seated in one of the benches lining some pathways just outside of the school's building, and he watched as a bird fluttered down from a tree to land near their feet. "You have no idea how much I would do for you."

"What?" Karl moved to look up at Sapnap, his eyes blown wide in surprise. Sapnap stared back in confusion until he realized he had voiced his thoughts on accident.

"That I would do so much for you, Karl. You're one of my best friends," Sapnap attempted to save face by steering it back into friendly territory, hoping Karl couldn't feel his heart drumming rapidly against his chest. Karl's eyes dimmed the slightest bit despite the smile that slipped onto his face.

"Thanks. Right back at you."

The bell rang out suddenly, and Sapnap realized he had spent the entire lunch period with Karl. He completely missed practice, something he had never done before, but he realized he didn't even regret having done so.

If he could go back in time, he would have picked Karl time and time again.

"We should head inside," Karl shifted away from Sapnap and got up, and immediately he missed the contact, the warmth of Karl against his side, like he belonged there.

But he didn't. Karl had made that clear before- he wanted to forget the kiss, and keep it friendly between the two of them. And though it sucked, Sapnap would respect that.

Sapnap stood up as well, and the two slowly made their way back to class in silence, both unknowingly taking their time to merely be in each other's presence for a little while longer.

And if the back of their hands ended up brushing against each other several times, the two of them pretended not to notice.



After spending the lunch period with Niki and Minx, the bell rang out and the three began making their way back inside to class. As George began falling a bit behind from the two, his steps slowing as he felt another wave of sleepiness overtake him, Minx slowed a bit herself to fall in step with him.

"Hey George, are you alright? No offense, but this whole day you've seemed like you went to the pits of hell and then crawled your way back out," she noted, and George realized this was her way of worrying about him.

"I'm fine, just tired. Didn't sleep too well last night," George explained, and he could feel her eyes scan his face for a second longer before she nodded and began speeding up to catch up with Niki again. Before she could, though, George suddenly reached out and grabbed hold of her wrist, making her whip around to face him again.

"It's her, isn't it," George whispered just loudly enough for Minx to hear, stealing a look at Niki's retreating back before flicking his eyes back at Minx who now stood paralyzed, her eyes blown wide.

"How-?"

George smiled softly at her, dropping his hand from her wrist. "Guess I'm not the only one that wears my heart on my sleeve sometimes."

Minx gaped at him for a moment longer before turning away from him, but not before George noticed her face flush and a smile slip onto her face. She caught up with Niki who had stopped to wait for her, and he waved goodbye at them both before turning to go to his next class.

He realized a moment later a smile had slipped onto his face, too.



Clay was laying his head in his arms, sitting at one of the tables in the middle of the school's medium sized library. He tried not to skip class too often, but he didn't feel like listening to his history teacher drone on about events that happened decades ago at that moment in time.

His eyes felt raw and puffy from the crying he had done during lunch, and he could bet his eyes looked red as hell after it, too. He hoped nobody looked at him and thought he had been smoking weed or something, though he supposed that was probably a less embarrassing story than saying he

had been bawling like a baby over a boy.

He jolted when he felt a tap on his exposed forearm, whipping his head up to stare at the perpetrator. He was met with dark brown, curious eyes, messy, reddish brown locks with a streak of white coming to rest just above his raised brows. Clay received a small smile in return, and he relaxed a bit as the boy slid into the seat in front of him.

"Hey, Fundy," he smiled softly, feeling exhaustion suddenly crash into him as he rested his head on his arms, staring up at the other. Fundy had been drumming his fingers against the table, but Clay's movement to lie on his crossed arms made him startle for a second, as if caught off guard, before he continued drumming that same rhythm except a bit faster.

"Hey, Clay. How come you're not in class?"

"Why aren't you?" he countered, snickering when Fundy muttered a soft, "Fair."

"Just feeling a little too tired to pay attention in class, if I'm being honest," Clay said next, and Fundy flashed him an amused smirk.

"Do you ever pay attention in class, though?"

"Oh, fuck off," Clay lightly slapped one of Fundy's hands, making the boy let out a snicker of his own. He moved to mimic Clay's position, his head resting atop his crossed arms on the table, and the two stared at each other in a lapse of silence.

"Have you watched Treasure Planet yet?" Fundy asked suddenly, and Clay had to bite back a laugh as he rolled his eyes at him.

"No, I haven't. Are you still going to insist that I-"

"You have to watch Treasure Planet," Fundy cut in, and this time Clay actually did laugh.

"And there it is," Clay teased, making Fundy roll his eyes fondly. "I'll watch it one day, maybe."

"Will you, though?"

"Probably not."

"Of course," Fundy chuckled softly, and Clay grinned back at him. Fundy stared at Clay for a moment before his eyebrows furrowed, concern flashing in his eyes. "Were you crying?"

"What? No, of course not," Clay lied, and Fundy gave him an unconvinced look.

"Your eyes are red."

"Yeah from...hardcore drug use."

Fundy burst out laughing, and Clay had to rush to try to shush him, looking around for the angry librarian he was sure the noise would attract. He wasn't being of much help, though, what with the soft, wheezy laughs pouring out of him, too.

"Okay, it's not from drugs, you got me," Clay drawled sarcastically, making Fundy laugh softly again. "It's just...kind of embarrassing."

"I won't judge," Fundy assured, leaning towards him attentively. Clay forced a smile, laughing a bit awkwardly.

"It's just, um...I found out my crush likes someone else, so I was pretty bummed. I had just started getting my hopes up, too," Clay admitted, leaning his head against one of his palms, his elbow digging into the table. "Has that ever happened to you?"

Fundy seemed a bit surprised at the question, and when he smiled it didn't seem to reach his eyes. "Uh, yeah. Just happened to me, actually."

"Awe, seriously? I'm sorry to hear that," Clay felt bad for the boy, especially when he waved Clay off with a forced laugh. "No, seriously. Whoever it is, they don't deserve you. And you'll find someone that will appreciate what an amazing person you are, Funds."

Fundy smiled sadly at him, his hand drumming against the table rapidly. "Thanks, Clay. It means a lot."

"Of course," Clay smiled, and he felt slightly better that he was able to comfort him, even the slightest bit. "So, who is it?"

"I, um," Fundy's eyes flicked between Clay's own before turning to stare at his fingers tapping away at the table. Clay hadn't realized his hand seemed to shake the slightest bit. "I rather not say, if that's okay."

"Oh, that's fine! Don't worry," Clay assured him, moving to rest his hand atop the boy's in an attempt to ease the shaking a bit. He felt him freeze. "Seriously, you'll find someone better and forget all about them."

Fundy let out a soft laugh, and Clay felt Fundy's hand shift under his own before their fingers were interlocking lazily. "I don't think I'll be able to forget him, but thank you."

Fundy's gaze glanced back up to Clay's face, and the two stared at each other for another few seconds of silence. Fundy was the first to break the eye contact, his hand slipping away from Clay's to fall onto his lap, Clay retracting his own hand.

"So, how about you?" Fundy asked, clearing his throat and not meeting his eye right away. Clay blinked.

"What do you mean?"

"Do you want to talk about your crush?" Fundy specified, playing with a splinter at the corner of the wooden table. Clay hummed in understanding before dropping his own gaze to his hands, chocolate eyes and a smile just as sweet flashing in his mind.

"I just...I know they like someone else and went on a date with the person so, its practically guaranteed I have no chance, right?" Clay chuckled darkly, his eyes too dry and raw from earlier to get teary-eyed again. "Just kind of sucks, you know."

"I do know," Fundy nodded. "But I think, maybe you should try going after them anyway."

"You do?"

"Yeah. Clay, you're always- you're such a selfless person, and you always put others before you that sometimes you put their happiness over your own, too, but you deserve to be selfish sometimes," Fundy urged, staring intently at him. "You deserve time be happy, too. So I think, even if it doesn't work out in the end, that you should fight for this person. Or at least tell them how you truly feel. You might regret it if you don't."

Clay gaped at him, caught off guard by this serious side of Fundy he didn't get to see often. As his words sunk in, though, he felt a surge of resolution overcome him as he stood from his chair quickly, staring down at Fundy's determined eyes. "You're right. You're absolutely right, Funds. Thank you so much."

"You're welcome, Clay," Fundy smiled at him, and Clay returned the smile just as widely, reaching towards him to ruffle his white-streaked hair. As Clay turned and left with newfound determination, he didn't hear Fundy let out a broken sigh, his fingers running through where Clay's hands had just come in contact with his hair. He let his hand drop and stared at the back of it, his eyebrows furrowing as his fingers continued to tingle where his and Clay's fingers had interlocked slightly.

"I'm such a hypocrite," Fundy muttered to himself, dropping his head against the table with a frustrated groan. But as he thought of Clay smiling at him, his heart stuttering in his chest at the mere mental image, an unconscious smile slipped onto his face as he thought the pain had been worth it.

## Chapter End Notes

HI LOVELIES I MISSED U ALL <3333 HOW HAS EVERYONE BEEN

Kind of a slow chapter, this one, but I felt it was necessary for what's to come! Hope you all enjoyed :]

Take care of yourselves guys, love you all so much <3

- Kirbs -

P.S. just some extra stuff but follow me on Twitter! @kirbakiii with three i's over there :]

(I have the same @ on insta too btw)

and another thing, I'm posting the first chapter of a texting fic I want to start doing that will update (hopefully) more often than Love, Dream does, so you guys can have something to read while waiting for the next chapter of this book :] it's called "do not disturb" and includes ships (dnf, karlnap, skephalo) as well! I'm going to try to make it as chaotic as possible so I hope to see some of u guys there ♥

here's the link to read it: <https://archiveofourown.org/works/30917207>



## Chapter 22

### Chapter Summary

hospital bonding time™

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Seriously, are you sure you're okay?" George asked again. Karl let out a deep sigh.

"George, I've told you a million times already, I'm fine. I just needed to find Ssnap so I left fast, sorry I made you worry," Karl repeated, squeezing George's shoulder as a form of reassurance. Class had just ended, and the two of them had gotten their things together and were already back out the door, standing in the middle of the now-busy hallway. George frowned, not entirely convinced by Karl's excuse, but remained silent as Ssnap walked up beside them. Karl stole a glance at the boy before flashing George a small smile. "Besides, worry about yourself. You still look pale, Georgie."

"Yeah, dude, you need to get some rest one you get home. You slept through like half the class period again," Ssnap agreed while slinging an arm around George's shoulder, ruffling his hair. George caught Karl flinch at the action, his smile twitching. Ssnap grinned devilishly. "You need your beauty rest to keep that pretty face of yours."

"Oh, shut up," George batted him away with his hands, and Ssnap finally let him go with a snicker. When he glanced at Karl, he was looking between the two of them with an unreadable expression, his eyes suddenly glazed over, his small smile completely gone.

"Karl?" George spoke up hesitantly, and Karl seemed to snap out of whatever trance he was in, meeting George's concerned gaze.

"Hm? What?"

"Karl, what is it?" Ssnap's voice questioned softly as his eyebrows furrowed in concern, also having noticed Karl's expression. His hand reached towards him but Karl jerked away from the touch, his eyes flashing as they snapped back to meet George's.

"I'm fine," Karl gritted out, and Ssnap looked taken aback, hurt visible in his face, but he didn't say anything else as Karl backed away from the two, not meeting their eyes. "I have to go to the restroom really quick so you two go on without me. I'll see you in class, George."

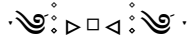
George took a step towards him just as Karl turned to walk in the opposite direction, and he watched his retreating back until he was swallowed up by the crowd of students in the hall.

"We should get to class," Ssnap spoke up after a few seconds, and George turned to see he was still staring at the spot where Karl had just disappeared, a forlorn look painting his features. He was suddenly reminded of Karl admitting he had a crush on Ssnap just that morning, and he found himself wondering if the feelings were reciprocated.

"Is Karl alright?" he asked instead, making Ssnap turn his attention to him. The two had showed

up to class together, so George assumed they had spent lunch in each other's company. "Did he tell you anything?"

"No, he didn't really tell me much," Sapnap sighed, looking a bit frustrated with himself. "He'll be fine, though." And in a softer voice, just before he had turned to walk to his next class, George heard him mutter, "I hope."



"Dude, where the hell were you? Wilbur was asking for you. Why did you skip class? And without me??" Sapnap berated him with questions when he spotted Clay wandering the halls later that day, looking like a lost puppy.

Although Fundy had motivated Clay enough to convince him to talk to George and not give up on him so fast, the moment he stepped out of the library's double doors, he realized he had no idea what he could even say.

George didn't know he had rejected Clay, because he rejected Dream. And George didn't know Dream was Clay.

He spent the rest of the remaining class period wandering the mostly empty halls, his mind providing him with dozens of different reasons why revealing to George that he was Dream was a terrible idea. His overthinking had led him to spend 30 minutes lost in thought, and it wasn't until the bell rang and students began pouring out into the halls that he snapped out of it, somewhat. But even then, he couldn't find the will to search for George, and in all honesty, he had started to dread facing him.

Also, his leg had kind of started to hurt really bad. He had been ignoring the jolts of pain shooting up from his ankle the whole day, but now it was killing him, the pain more constant and less easy to ignore.

Despite his mental battle and physical discomfort, he found himself smiling cheekily at his best friend, raising an amused brow at him. "You skipped football practice and you didn't tell me, to be fair. Where were you?"

"Nuh-uh. I'm the one asking the questions here, Dreamy," Sapnap grinned darkly, and Clay panicked, slapping one of his hands over Sapnap's mouth while glancing at the people around them. Thankfully, neither Karl nor George were anywhere in sight, so he relaxed a bit before suddenly jolting away from Sapnap.

"Ew did you just- You licked my hand??" Clay cringed in disbelief, wiping his hand on Sapnap's hoodie in exaggerated disgust. Sapnap let out a cackle as he moved away from Clay's hand full of his own slobber.

"Don't put your hand over my mouth, then."

"But you called me-" Clay paused, glancing around again as he dropped his voice to a hiss. "Dreamy. What if George was nearby and put two and two together."

"He wouldn't. George is way too oblivious," Sapnap snickered, before his face dropped. "Well...actually, scratch that. He would have probably figured it out in a heartbeat, since he already

has."

It took him a second to process Sapnap's words but once he realized what he had said, Clay felt his heart drop out of his ass. "He fucking WHAT?!"

"Wait, wait, wait, chill dude. It's okay. A situation came up but I handled it, so he doesn't know," Sapnap assured him, but Clay didn't feel too reassured, what with his throat going dry and his heart threatening to burst out of his chest from panic.

"But he had...figured it out?" Clay asked again, emphasizing each word carefully while attempting to process this information himself. Sapnap gave him a comforting pat on his shoulder.

"He had his suspicions Dream was you. He asked me about your email, but I lied about it and told him there was no way it was you. I'm pretty sure he believed me, so he doesn't suspect you anymore," Sapnap explained, and Clay allowed a small wave of relief to wash over him, but a small voice in the back of his mind was telling him that if George figured it out once, he could easily figure him out again.

He needed to be careful.

"And you owe me for it. I feel terrible lying to Gogy. He's going to hate me when he finds out I lied to his face like that," Sapnap sulked, cutting through Clay's inner turmoil and allowing a fond smile to make its way onto Clay's face.

"I'm sorry you had to lie for me, Sap. I'll make it up to you. How about I take you out to eat somewhere after school?" Clay offered, and Sapnap's grim expression instantly lit right back up.

"It's a date. No backsies. You are taking me to Panda Express and letting me get as much food as I want."

Clay let out a soft wheeze at his sudden enthusiasm. "Whatever you say, Sap."

"Oh and also, I had something else I wanted to tell you," Sapnap said suddenly, as if it had just come back to him. Clay tilted his head a bit in question as Sapnap gave him a sad look. "I hate being the one to tell you this but...Minx and George went on a date yesterday."

"I know," Clay responded automatically, making Sapnap's eyes widen comically. He laughed a bit at his reaction. "Yeah, Schlatt told us in the locker rooms. He saw them on their date."

Sapnap's eyebrows furrowed while his eyes searched Clay's, a look of worry visible in them. Almost hesitantly, but in a voice dripping with concern, he asked, "...are you okay?"

Clay forced a smile, though it felt a little wobbly. He was suddenly reminded of how much Sapnap truly cared for him, even if he didn't always show it, and how much Clay loved his best friend. "I'll be fine. I had all of lunch to process it, and I kind of already have."

"That's good," Sapnap nodded slightly, before lowering his voice. "Also I wasn't going to tell you this, because I would hate to be wrong and get your hopes up for nothing, but I think you might still have a shot anyway."

This came as a surprise to Clay. "W-What?"

"When I basically flat out told George that you weren't Dream, he looked pretty disappointed. He also got all red when Karl joked that you might be his secret admirer, too."

"Why would Karl- Well still...that doesn't...mean anything," Clay rebuked weakly, his heart beginning to beat slightly faster despite himself. "He could have just been, like...weirded out by Karl's comment."

"No, dude, I know what I saw. He turned bright red when he was being teased about you liking him. And that doesn't happen when you just get weirded out by something. That has to mean something," Sapnap insisted, before backpedaling a bit. "At least, that's what I think. But I could be wrong, so don't get your hopes up or anything. I would hate to see you disappointed because of me."

"I won't, I won't. Don't worry," Clay assured softly. "Thanks for telling me, Sap."

"No problem. I just want you to be happy, dude," Sapnap grinned softly, and Clay smiled in turn.

But as the two said goodbye to each other and began walking their separate ways to their next period, Clay's mind spun with Sapnap's last revelation, already feeling a dangerous prick of hope make his heart to beat just that little bit faster.

It wasn't until Clay glanced upwards and spotted George making his way down the hallway towards him, his eyes pointed to his left, squinting in delight, his mouth open in a laugh at something Karl had just told him, that he snapped back into reality by tripping on his own two feet, sending him scrambling forward to steady himself.

He caught his footing, but just as he did, he stepped on his injured foot roughly and crumpled forward, falling to his knees as a jolt of pain made his vision go white.

"Shit," he gasped out, and he barely heard when George called out his name, barely registered his footsteps rushing towards him or when he knelt down by his side, his hand coming up to brush against his arm in timid worry.

The only thing filling his mind was how numb his foot suddenly felt, the tingles shooting up his leg, and the throbbing pain coming from his ankle making him bite the inside of his mouth until he tasted blood.

Shit.

·☹️▷◻◀️☹️·

Clay hated hospitals.

They smelled strongly of antiseptic and bleach, but they always carried an undertone smell of alcohol, blood, urine, and body odor, all mixing together to create a nauseating and putrid smell.

Hospitals were always stuffy and either too warm or too cold with no in between, and overall made for a rather unpleasant environment.

What he hated most about hospitals, though, were the memories they forced to the front of his mind.

Being in one only reminded him of the aftermath of the accident, of waking up in an uncomfortably stiff hospital bed only to find out his sister's leg had been crushed in the wreckage of his car, and

being forced to hear her bloodcurdling screams of unadulterated pain and agony in the room over just before she was sedated, and just before her surgical procedure began.

Hospitals were a reminder that he had made it out of the accident in one piece, but his sister hadn't. The accident had cost of his little sister her left leg because of his own incompetence and carelessness.

Hospitals were only a reminder that he didn't deserve to have made it out alive.

Even though he willed these painful memories away, they insisted on staying at the forefront of his consciousness, Drista's screams insistent on echoing in the chambers of his mind.

He shut his eyes tight when he heard the door to his room swing open, and as several pairs of footsteps neared the side of his bed, he pretended to be asleep.

He didn't want to talk to anybody right now. Not with his current mental state.

"Is he asleep?" someone asked quietly. It was Wilbur.

"I think he is," another voice answered. Sapnap. "I mean, I'm not surprised. He's on a shit ton of pain killers right now."

There was a sigh from someone else entirely, followed by the scraping of a metal chair against the tile floor before whoever it was sat down on it at his bedside. As he felt eyes digging holes into the side of his face, his own eyes remained closed.

"Clay, your mom is on her way. Are you awake?" the third voice asked, and he felt his pulse immediately spike.

George.

At Clay's silence, George exhaled softly, before quietly murmuring, "Guess not."

"Are you sure you want to stay? We've already been here for a while, and you were feeling pretty tired today...we can head home now if you want. You need to get some rest, too," a fourth voice came, one he recognized as Karl's.

"...I'm sure. I'm fine, I'm not too tired," George responded decidedly, and Clay felt warmth spread through his chest.

"We'll go to the front to wait for Clay's mom, then. Stay here with him in case he wakes up," Sapnap directed, and it was followed by a soft hum of acknowledgement as three pairs of footsteps retreated from the room, gently shutting the door behind them.

Silence blanketed them once more, and Clay could practically hear George's soft breathing coming from his spot at his bedside. A few moments passed, and then he spoke so softly that Clay wouldn't have heard him if the place were any louder. "You pushed yourself, idiot."

Clay was about to open his eyes when he felt soft fingers brush some of the hair off of his forehead, making him freeze. George's hand hesitated for a moment, and Clay just about held his breath, praying his raging heartbeat wouldn't somehow be loud enough to hear.

Fingers began gently carding through his wavy hair, first slowly, hesitantly, and then with more confidence, and Clay had to resist the strong urge to lean into it. The touch was so delicate, so fond, if he dared hope, that it had his heart stuttering in his chest and his stomach bursting with a

swarm of butterflies.

"You're so dumb," George continued in a huff, and Clay had to fight down a smile that threatened to break through. "Why do you keep your problems all bottled up? It's like you don't think. You should have said something if your ankle was still hurting. You dummy."

As George moved his hand away from his hair, Clay unconsciously chased after it, making George let out a sharp gasp. Clay froze.

"Clay? Are you awake?"

Fuck.

He slowly opened his eyes again, squinting up at the fluorescent lights in the small hospital room before his gaze dragged to the side to meet George's sharp eyes, blown wide in surprise.

The two of them stared at each other for a lapse of silence, their bated breaths the only sound filling the space between them. Clay should have felt more panicked for having been caught, but with the meds currently in his system making him feel all loopy, the racing of his heart was provoked by an entirely different reason.

George was really pretty.

"Have you been awake this whole time?" George finally forced out, his voice sounding a bit strangled. His expression suddenly hardened with his words, and his gaze flicked away from his and wasn't meeting Clay's anymore. Clay frowned a bit, thrown by George's sudden shift.

"My ankle is doing great, thanks for asking," Clay muttered lightheartedly, but it only made George's eyebrows dip lower. Clay coughed awkwardly. "I was," he admitted, searching George's eyes for any kind of sign of what was going through the brunette's mind in that moment. What could possibly be causing his eyes to cloud over and his expression to purposefully go blank. His walls were suddenly up and he had no clue as to why.

Another moment of tense silent passed, and Clay hated the sudden awkward atmosphere between them, but he was too out of it to know how to lift the mood.

"I should..." George coughed out eventually, suddenly moving his seat back a bit to stand, the scrape of the metal against the tile flooring causing shivers to travel down Clay's back. "I should get goi-"

"You did that at the party," Clay cut him off. George froze, his body half off his chair and angled to leave.

"What?"

"At the party. You don't remember, but you had, uh," Clay stammered a bit, his hand gesturing at his own hair. "You had done that. Played with my hair."

George's eyes shot down to meet Clay's. His mouth twitched. "I played with your hair?"

"Yeah," Clay exhaled, swallowing roughly past his suddenly dry throat to get the next words out. "We had been in the woods behind Karl's house, and we were sitting on the ground. You were sitting cross legged and I was uh...I-I was lying my head on your lap."

Clay didn't miss the way a pink flush bloomed on George's cheeks at his words, but pretended to

ignore it as the shorter boy slowly sat back down on his chair.

"And, um," Clay cleared his throat to continue. "I was talking to you, about different things, and you started playing with my hair. You doing that just now...it, uh. Reminded me of that."

George watched him silently for a moment, his mind probably trying to process this new information, but Clay felt himself shifting unconsciously under his gaze.

"Explains the deja vu," George muttered. Clay's eyebrows shot up.

"What?"

"I got deja vu while I was-" George's voice cut off, his face flushing darker as he broke eye contact. "You know. It's kind of why I did it, so it explains a lot."

Clay remained silent for a moment, before hesitantly asking, "Do you...remember anything now? About that night?"

George's eyebrows furrowed as he stared down at his hands laying on the sheets of the hospital bed, looking deep in thought. "I've gotten...some memories back. I remember bits and pieces, really."

"Like?"

George made a face. "Stuff."

Clay let out a soft laugh. "You have to be more specific, George."

George let out an annoyed groan which pulled a small wheeze out of Clay, the sound making George's mouth quirk up slightly. "I remember running after you. I vaguely remember running into the woods, though I don't remember what happened when I found you." George paused. He cleared his throat. "I remember falling asleep in bed." Another pause, and George shyly met Clay's stunned gaze. "You were lying down next to me."

Clay's pulse spiked for the umpteenth time that day. "Yeah?"

George's face was bright red. "What do you mean 'yeah,' you're the one that's supposed to remember."

"No, I just mean," Clay stammered quickly. "I'm surprised you remember. You passed out pretty fast."

Another lapse of silence, and Clay got an idea. He spoke up again. "Get up."

"Huh?" George asked dumbly, caught off guard by the demand.

"Get up from your seat really quick. Just do it."

George gave him a questioning gaze but did as he was told and without thinking, Clay suddenly reached out and grabbed hold of George's wrist.

"What-"

"Get in the bed."

"WHAT?"

"GET IN THE BED."

Clay pulled on George's wrist, forcing him to stumble forward and fall down on the empty space beside him on the small hospital bed. George's eyes grew big as saucers, his mouth dropping open in surprise.

The two were now laying on their sides on the hospital bed, their faces mere inches apart, causing Clay's stomach to do several flips and his heart to stutter out of control.

"What is wrong with you?!" George gasped out, but before he could move to get off the bed, Clay pulled on his wrist again, keeping him in place. "Clay!"

"Are you getting deja vu?" Clay asked. George looked at Clay like he had just grown two heads.

"I-I guess?"

"Do you remember..." In a dangerous wave of confidence, Clay reached forward, mimicking George's movements from that night. George flinched as Clay's finger grazed over the bridge of his nose and over his rosy cheeks, which quickly darkened in color. "...doing this?"

George pushed his hand away, his hold lingering on Clay's hand for a moment before letting go. "I was drunk. Don't do that."

"Don't do what? This?" Clay asked, poking George's cheek. His hand was swatted away.

"Stop it, Clay!" George yelped, and Clay was unable to hold back the wicked smile that formed on his face.

"Oh, so now poking is off limits, huh," Clay said lowly, trying to get a jab at George's face again, who was trying his best to block the attacks with his hands. "Convenient."

"Clay, seriously, stop," George said again, but he was beginning to giggle as Clay continued with his relentless pokes. "Clay!"

Clay moved to attack George's sides, and as it turned out, George was ticklish, too. He barked out a laugh and started squealing as he attempted to get Clay's hands away from him, but Clay easily overpowered George in his vulnerable state and was able to continue to tickle him.

"Clay! Stop, this isn't fair!" George forced out between rounds of laughter, and at this point, Clay was letting out wheezes of his own.

"This is my revenge!" Clay declared in an exaggerated villain voice, which somehow made George start to laugh harder, tears beginning to collect at the corner of his squinted eyes.

"Stop! Seriously, stop, Clay, I'm crying-" George gasped out as he pressed his hands on Clay's chest to push him away while curling his body in an attempt to escape Clay's touch, but in doing so, he head butted Clay right on the chin. Clay let out a short grunt of pain, and George froze when he realized what he had done, his head whipping back up.

"Oh my god, are you okay-"

George cut himself off with a soft gasp, and it took Clay a few moments to process the new position in which they found themselves in.

George's fingers were tightly clutching onto the front of Clay's black shirt while Clay's hands rested



on either side of George's small waist, the two of them having shifted so closely on the bed in the midst of their struggle that their faces were mere inches apart from each other. If either of them moved any closer, their bodies would be practically pressed up against the other's.

Neither of them moved. Neither of them dared to even breathe.

Moments passed, and George still hadn't moved away.

Why wasn't he moving away?

"Hey George," Clay spoke just barely above a whisper, almost fearful that if his voice were any louder, the moment would shatter and George would leave.

George didn't leave.

"Yes?" he answered just as softly. Blood was rushing in Clay's ears, and he could only hope the growing heat on his face wasn't entirely noticeable.

"Do you remember asking me...about the color of my eyes?" Clay asked. George's eyes flicked between his own, something Clay couldn't read visible in those dark brown eyes of his. Clay continued, "You asked me if they were green."

"Yeah I think I...kind of remember."

"You said they were piss colored," Clay wheezed softly, and a small smile began to creep back onto George's face.

"To me they're piss colored," he grinned in amusement. Clay scoffed with a smile.

"What? That's kind of rude, George."

"No, literally. Have I not told you?"

"Told me what?"

George let out a breathy laugh. "I'm colorblind, Clay."

Clay blinked once. Twice. His eyes widened. "Wait, you're serious?"

"Yeah," George laughed softly. "I can't see the color green. To me, your eyes are a yellow color."

"No way," Clay let out in awe, making George giggle in a way that sent the swarm of butterflies living in his stomach into a frenzy. "You're missing out. Green is like, the best color ever."

"Sure, Clay," George rolled his eyes, and Clay cracked a smile at the action.

Another stretch of silence passed. The two openly stared at each other, and still, for whatever reason, neither moved away.

"Do you like Minx?" Clay blurted out. George's eyebrows drew up.

"Minx? Where is this coming from?"

"I heard you guys went on a date yesterday," Clay said. George pursed his lips, and Clay braced himself for the answer. He expected to hear, "Yes, we went on a date and I like her a lot." But instead of this, he responded:

"We did, but it only made me realize I didn't like her that way."

Wait.

WAIT.

"You don't like her??" Clay sputtered out in shock, and something flashed in George's eyes.

"I don't."

And with just two words, Clay felt as if a boulder had been thrown off of his shoulder. He swears the heavens opened up and a full chorus of angels broke into song right there and then. He might as well have joined in.

"Oh," Clay said instead, and he allowed himself to openly stare at the boy that could make his heart soar one moment and rip it into shreds the next. And in that moment, George was doing the first one for him.

Without thinking, Clay's gaze dragged down to hover at George's lips.

He watched as they parted in an almost silent gasp, and Clay knew George had noticed. He knew he wasn't being the least bit subtle, but in that moment, with pain killers running through his veins and clouding his judgement, he couldn't find a reason to care.

George didn't like Minx.

He didn't like her.

George wasn't lying in a hospital bed, practically chest to chest with another girl.

He was lying in a hospital bed, practically chest to chest, with him. And he had yet, in the past 5 minutes they had been in this position, to move away.

"That has to mean something," Sapnap had told him earlier in the day.

As Clay stared at the other's soft lips, George still didn't move away.

That has to mean something.

Clay shifted closer the smallest fraction, leaving nearly no space between them at all. George still refused to move.

This means something.

He crept forward another inch, now only a breath of air separating his lips from George's. He could feel George's breath fanning his lips lightly, and his heart began to pound as George's mouth parted the slightest bit, and he moved forward as well.

Holy fucking shit.

Clay met him halfway, his lips brushing against George's the slightest bit. The small contact instantly sent a current of electricity to course all throughout his whole body, and fireworks erupted in his chest when he felt George's lips press back a bit against his. He drew his head back in shock, but George chased after him and he felt those soft lips press against his again. Clay could have sworn he felt his heart combust.

Clay kissed back gently, pressing just enough to let George know it was reciprocated, and he felt George sigh into the kiss. The butterflies in his stomach were flapping up a storm as George drew back this time, allowing in some space between them again.

George's cheeks were an adorable pink, and his doe eyes were blown wide in a mix of shock and amazement. Clay could only imagine how red his face must've been as he gaped at the boy he had just kissed.

He had kissed George.

And George had kissed him back.

"What was-"

"George, I-"

The two spoke over each other, making them both fall silent.

"You first," they both said at the same time, and they both cracked a shy grin at each other.

Before either could say anything more, the door to the room suddenly swung open. George nearly jumped out of his skin, shooting away from Clay so fast he rolled right off the corner of the bed and landed in a heap on the ground. Clay felt his heart hiccup in fright as his eyes shot to the person now standing at the doorway, staring at the two with wide eyes.

"Um," Sapnap started, his eyes shooting from Clay to George and then back to Clay. "Am I interrupting something?"

"No!" Clay and George exclaimed at the same time, making Sapnap's eyes widen further before narrowing suspiciously. Clay could only imagine how red he must have looked in that moment, and as George shot up from the floor and walked towards the doorway to exit the room, he caught a glance of his burning face, too. Sapnap watched George go before turning to raise an eyebrow at Clay.

"Ok, well...your mom is here and she's really-"

"Clay!" a familiar voice exclaimed from behind Sapnap, and he quickly moved to the side to let Clay's mother storm into the room. "What were you thinking?!"

"Mom," Clay let out just as he was practically tackled in a bear hug.

"Why didn't you tell me you had gotten injured last week?! I was so worried!" his mother cried out as she held on tightly to her eldest son. Clay hesitantly hugged back, feeling guilt grip at his heart.

He shot a glare at Sapnap, who still stood by the doorway except now with the company of Karl and Wilbur, and he mouthed an angry, "You told her?" at him. Sapnap raised his hands in surrender, flashing him an apologetic look, and Clay couldn't stay mad at him for it. He sighed and flashed him a tired smile, waving him off with a mouthed, "It's fine."

"The last thing I wanted was to worry you. I'm sorry," Clay now whispered into his mother's hair. She pulled back, holding Clay by the shoulders while her eyes frantically searched his.

"Honey, I'm your mother. It's my job to worry. You should have told me before," she said softly, and Clay nodded in understanding. "We could have prevented it from getting worse, and now look at you. You're in a cast!"

Clay glanced down at his injured foot, which was now wrapped up in a stiff, white cast. Turns out that when George, Sapnap, Karl, Wilbur and him had arrived at the hospital to get his ankle checked, the doctor said his sprained ankle had turned into a fractured one because he didn't allow it the proper time to heal.

Now he was forced to walk around with crutches and a cast for at least the 4 weeks it would take to heal, which also meant 4 weeks off the football team. And all because he wanted to pretend he was just fine in order to not worry anyone.

Nice going, Clay.

"I know. I'm so sorry, mom," Clay mumbled, and he was brought in for another tight hug that made him feel like he was 6 years old again.

"It's okay, Clay. Just tell me these things next time, alright?"

Clay nodded into her shoulder, squeezing his mother tightly.

"Alright."

The doctor arrived shortly after and gave the rundown of his injury to his mother, his friends continuing to wait outside the doorway the whole time. Once he was discharged and given a pair of crutches to use, Clay exited with his mother, glancing at the four boys standing just outside the room.

"You guys didn't have to skip school to drive me here, much less wait for me," Clay said as his gaze flicked to Karl's, who had been the one to drive the five of them there.

After Clay made a scene in the middle of the hallway, Karl had called Sapnap, who rushed over to where Clay was crumpled on the ground, George at his side. They had impulsively decided to take him to the hospital a few streets down from their school, and as the four of them made their way to the parking lot, Sapnap and Karl holding onto either side of Clay to help him walk while George called Wilbur to get out of class and come with them, they decided that Karl would drive them there, leaving Sapnap and Clay's cars in the school parking lot. Really, there was no reason for all of them to have come, but Clay appreciated that they did nonetheless.

"And go to class instead? No thanks. You know, you should bust your ankle more often," Sapnap chimed in, and chuckles erupted from the five of them.

"Thank you boys for coming here with Clay, he is very lucky to have such caring friends," Clay's mother cut in, smiling warmly at the group. "Do you all have a ride home?"

"I can ride with Karl. That's cool, right?" Sapnap turned towards Karl, who gave him a small smile in return.

"Of course, Sap. Always."

"What about you, sweetie?" Clay's mom turned to George next, who stiffened under her gaze. Clay felt his heart jump into his throat.

"Um, I'm with them, too. I'm living with Karl, currently," George explained stiffly, awkwardly pointing at Karl before rubbing the back of his neck.

"Oh! You're another one of the exchange students! You have a very lovely accent. What's your name?"

Clay wanted to kill himself.

"George," he gave her a crooked smile, and as Clay's panicked eyes stared at George, he refused to meet his gaze.

"Well George, it's been a pleasure to meet you. Thank you for being here for Clay," his mom smiled warmly before turning to address Wilbur. "We should get going now, Clay's siblings are alone at home."

The group began to make their way back to the entrance of the hospital. Clay fell a bit behind, still not used to having to walk with the support of crutches, but George slowed down to walk beside him. Although George still refused to meet his eye, the action alone made his heart just about beat out of his chest.

"Drive home safe, boys," his mother told Karl, Sapnap, and George once they arrived to the exit that led to the parking lot.

"Thank you, Mrs. Block. Likewise," Karl grinned.

"See you later, Mama Block," Sapnap saluted with a wink, and if Clay hadn't been in a cast, he would have kicked his ass.

"Nice meeting you," George said politely. His mother grinned as the boy's exchanged goodbyes as well.

"See you tomorrow, George," Clay addressed him directly and finally the brunette met his gaze, his chocolate eyes boring into his and nearly making his knees buckle.

"Bye, Clay," George responded evenly in that addicting accent of his, and something unspoken flashed between them just before he turned to exit the hospital behind Karl and Sapnap.

As Clay's mom drove him and Wilbur home, his mom's favorite radio station playing music over the low hum of the moving car, he silently stared out the window at the scenery flying by outside, his mind in a near state of shock.

His hand at some point reached up to trace his tingling lips as he felt a dumb smile spread across his face, making his cheeks hurt.

He didn't stop smiling the whole ride home.

## Chapter End Notes

hey lol

I hadn't initially planned on writing a kiss scene just yet but I felt bad for having to make you guys wait another 20 chapters for it, so hope you guys liked my little surprise <3

This chapter was centered on Clay's POV, but I wonder what could have possibly been going on in George's mind during all of this, hmm?

love you guys sm, hope you are all well!



## Intermission II

### Chapter Summary

Karl and Sapnap finally talk it out

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Can we go to Panda Express?"

"No, Sap."

"But Clay promised he would get me Panda Express. I bet he fractured his ankle just to get out of-"

"Sapnap!"

"What? I'm kidding! I still want Panda Express, though."

"My brother is home alone right now. I need to drop you off first and then get home with George. We don't have time for Panda Express."

"Can't I just sleep over?"

"My mom gets home later today."

"So? Your mom loves me, Karl."

Karl briefly stole a glance at the rear view mirror, catching Sapnap shooting him puppy dog eyes from the backseat of his car. He quickly looked away, his grip on the steering wheel subconsciously tightening as his attention turned back to the road ahead of him.

"Or maybe it's her son that doesn't love me?"

Karl felt his heart jump to his throat at Sapnap's words.

"What are you even saying," Karl stammered out, his sudden nerves causing him to let out a strangled giggle. He shot a look at George, who was beside him in the passenger seat, but the other was silently staring out the window, his head resting on his hand and turned away from view.

"C'mon, Karl. It wouldn't be the first time. Besides, we need to work on our project-"

Sapnap suddenly cut himself off, and as Karl processed his words, realization dawned on the both of them.

"OUR PROJECT IS DUE TOMORROW!!" they hollered at the same time, Karl whipping around to shoot a look of alarm over his shoulder at Sapnap, who instantly returned the look when their eyes met.

"Dude, watch the road!" Sapnap practically screeched at him, and Karl quickly turned back

around, the car swerving suddenly and sending George to slam headfirst into the car door's window.

"Holy fuck!" George screeched, instantly snapping out of whatever daze he was in as one hand dropped to clutch onto his chair tightly, the other coming up to rub at the bruise that was now forming on his forehead. Karl got the car steady again, and thankfully his mistake didn't send them cruising off the road.

"George, are you alright?" Karl winced as he watched George continue to rub his head out of the corner of his eye.

"I'm fine," he muttered in response.

"I'm so sorry, Georgie," Karl said guiltily. "I should have kept my eyes on the road."

"It's alright, Karl. Really," George reassured him, flashing him a small smile. "I'm not hurt, I was just taken by surprise."

"Don't worry, Gogy, I can kiss it better. C'mere," Sappnap cooed as he leaned forward towards George's chair, making kissy noises as he got closer to him. Even though George reacted with exaggerated noises of disgust and pushed his face away from him, Sappnap letting out a cackle at his reaction, Karl still felt his heart drumming in his chest painfully, the bitter taste of jealousy making his eyebrows draw together and forming his mouth into a thin line.

"I'll get you ice when we get home," Karl cut in stiffly. He could feel George's gaze on him, but his eyes remained glued to the road the whole ride home.



Sean was already home from school once they got back, and shortly after, Karl's mother arrived from her business trip. Whether it was motherly instinct or George's forehead had just turned really red, she immediately noticed George's bruise and got him an ice pack. She was also happy to let Sappnap sleep over, of course, but that only spiked Karl's nerves as he did his best to appear fine with it.

As George, Sappnap and Karl moved to his bedroom, the three wordlessly agreed to immediately get to work on their speech project that they hadn't even begun and yet was due the following day. They spent the rest of the afternoon rushing to get it finished last minute and practicing how they were going to present it, which thankfully kept Karl too distracted to even begin to spiral about anything Sappnap related.

As day became afternoon, and afternoon fell into night, the sky outside of his window displaying an inky black sky dusted with barely visible stars, they finally wrapped up their speech presentation and decided it would have to do.

Karl's mother immediately called them down for dinner once they finished, and the three sat down with her and Sean and wolfed down their food from how hungry they were, indulging in minimal small talk. George and Sappnap were quieter than usual, seeming rather lost in thought, but Karl was too preoccupied with his own scrambled thoughts to notice.

As the three trudged back up the stairs to Karl's room after stuffing themselves full, George's



phone suddenly started ringing. He looked down at the screen and his eyes widened slightly.

"I'm, uh, going to take this outside. I'll be with you guys in a second," George said quickly, before turning and dashing back down the stairs, going two at a time. Karl and Sapnap watched him go in surprise, sharing a confused look.

"Who do you think it was?" Sapnap asked.

"Minx, probably," he blurted out without thinking, and then immediately felt guilty. He bit the inside of his cheek as he gauged Sapnap's reaction, but for some reason, his expression remained blank.

"Does he actually like Minx?"

Karl felt his throat start to close up. He forced out, "He does."

"Are you sure, though?"

"Yes. He told me he did before their date."

"But what if he's changed his mind?" Sapnap countered with a shrug. Karl was starting to feel another emotion begin to bubble up to the surface. Without thinking, he shot a glare at Sapnap.

"What, do you want him to change his mind or something?" he snapped. Sapnap's eyes shot up before lowering into a frown. The two stared at each other for a few moments of tense silence.

"Oookay, yeah. Come on," Sapnap sighed suddenly, grabbing onto Karl's wrist and turning to drag him up the remaining steps and down the hall. Karl felt his heart hiccup, too stunned to do anything but let himself be led to his bedroom.

Once inside, Sapnap let go of Karl only to turn around and close the bedroom shut behind him. Karl seriously began to consider that he might go into cardiac arrest when Sapnap whirled around to pin him with his piercing stare.

"You've been acting weird," Sapnap stated matter-of-factly. Karl felt himself start to squirm under his unwithering gaze.

"No I haven't," he muttered stubbornly. Sapnap rolled his eyes before beginning to pace around his room.

"You have a meltdown during lunch, you randomly get this look like you just found out your cat died, you were kind of avoiding conversation with me back at the hospital, you were acting weird in the car ride home, dinner downstairs was awkward as hell, you are suddenly very snappy," Sapnap counted off each on his fingers, coming to a stop in front of Karl, now a lot closer to him.

Sapnap's face suddenly softened, making Karl's heart stutter painfully. "Seriously, what is going on? I didn't want to ask before because you didn't seem like you wanted to talk about it, but you're really starting to worry me, Karl. Clearly something happened because you never act like this." Sapnap's hands found Karl's and he held on to them so gently that Karl wanted to cry. "Talk to me. It's killing me seeing you act like this. You know you can tell me anything, right?"

Karl's eyes flickered between Sapnap's before he forced himself to look away. If he stared at those hurt eyes any longer then he would just about spill his guts out to the other boy. "I'm fine, Sap. Really."

"Karl-"

"I said I'm fine," Karl gritted out, slipping his hands out of Sapnap's. Something dark and foreign began curling in his gut, forcefully scratching and crawling past his throat and making him blurt out, "And that's kind of hypocritical to say, when you were the one avoiding me this morning and then outright lied to my face."

"What?"

His mind was screaming at him to stop, but it was as though he had no control of the words spewing out of his mouth. "Don't act dumb, Sap. You avoid me all morning, you act all weird around me, and then lie to me about what you needed George's email for. You lied about not knowing who 'Dream' was too, didn't you?"

Sapnap's face instantly paled, and even though Karl felt absolutely terrible, a tiny, horrible part of him felt a sense of satisfaction at having hit the mark.

"Karl-"

"So I'm right, aren't I? You lied about not knowing who Dream was."

"Well, yeah, but I only did that because-"

"Because you don't want George to know the truth." Karl's eyes narrowed to slits, his heart hammering in his chest as he willed the tears stinging his eyes to not spill over. In a shaky voice, he finished, "That you are Dream."

A look of confusion skittered across Sapnap's features as he seemed to process Karl's words before he suddenly threw his head back as a roar of laughter poured out of him. He cackled uncontrollably, making him lose his balance and send him toppling to the floor where he continued to roll around as laughter poured out of him in waves. Karl stared at him, stunned, not sure what to make of his reaction.

"Why are you laughing?!" Karl squeaked, and that only made Sapnap start to laugh harder, his fist slamming against the floor as he continued to let out loud belly laughs.

"Oh my god you think I'm- How did you ever come to that conclusion, Karl?" Sapnap let out between rounds of laughter, and Karl could only continue to blink at him in shock.

"But you're- you're him," Karl started weakly, then in a more sure voice continued. "You asked for George's email, and then lied about never emailing him. You're flirty with him, like, all the time. You acted weird when I told you he hadn't gotten sleep because of the- of the email you sent! You clearly lied to George when he asked you about the emailer! You seemed so upset when you found out that Minx and George went on a date, and that they liked each other, and even just a few minutes ago you were being so insistent on a 'what if'-"

"Wait, wait, wait, hold on," Sapnap cut him off. In the midst of his ramble, Karl hadn't even realized he had stood up from the floor and was now standing directly ahead of him, but all at once he became all too aware of their sudden close proximity. Sapnap was looking at him with an incredulous gaze, and Karl wanted to so badly look away, but for some reason, he couldn't bring himself to. "Do you think I like George?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Karl spoke softly, finally breaking eye contact to instead stare at a lone gum wrapper sitting on the floor, right beside the small trash can in a corner of his room.

"I'm not Dream."

Karl's eyes shot back to Sapnap's, and the honesty in his gaze caught him off guard. "But everything I said-

"Is just a big coincidence. It's a really crazy coincidence. Like, it's kind of scary how much it lines up. You almost had me convinced that I am Dream," Sapnap joked, but Karl didn't even crack a smile.

"So you're not actually-?"

"No. I swear to you. I know who Dream is, and even though I can't tell you who, I can assure you that it's not me."

Karl frowned, feeling his heart sink. "But then, you only like George." Sapnap looked at him like he had grown two heads.

"No, Karl, I don't like George-

"But you're always flirting-

"As a joke! You know it's a joke!"

"But you-

"I'm telling you I don't like George, I like-

"Is that why you were all freaked out about me kissing you on Friday?"

"What? Karl-

"You don't have to say something just to spare my feeli-

"I like you, you stupid idiot!"

Karl's next retort died on his tongue as his brain instantly shut down at Sapnap's words. He gawked at him, feeling his face grow hot as he watched Sapnap realize what he had just yelled out. His face turned bright red as well, but his eyebrows set in determination as his gaze didn't waver from Karl's.

"I like you, Karl," Sapnap repeated, firmly, as if he had to make sure Karl fully understood his words, though he couldn't even begin to process them. "I have for a long time."

Karl's heart might as well have come to a complete stop, but now it started beating again, so fast and so loud it was roaring in his ears and sending his mind spinning.

"You...like me?" Karl repeated dumbly. Sapnap nodded, and Karl felt on the verge of passing out. "You don't like George?"

"No, you dumbass," Sapnap huffed out, and his voice had sounded so soft, so sickently fond, that Karl actually melted. Giggles started pouring out of him, and then he was laughing, stumbling forward to ram his head into Sapnap's chest as his whole body was racked with pure, unadulterated euphoria. He laughed so hard tears began collecting at the corner of his eyes, and soon enough Sapnap had joined in, leaning into Karl and wrapping his arms around his middle as their laughter mixed in the nonexistent space between them.

"I'm such an idiot," Karl breathed out when he calmed down enough to be able to, and he could feel Sapnap chuckle against him, sending shivers down his back.

"Yeah, you kind of are. But you're my idiot, so I forgive you," Sapnap snickered teasingly. Karl pulled away from the hug to roll his eyes at the terrible one-liner, but a giddy smile had broken on his face and wasn't coming off anytime soon. He looked at Sapnap now, finding his gaze so soft that it set off a swarm of butterflies in his stomach.

"I like you, too, Sap," Karl grinned happily, and when a beautiful smile broke on Sapnap's face, Karl just about cried from the mere sight of it.

"I mean, obviously. Who wouldn't like me," Sapnap winked. Karl rolled his eyes again.

"Shut up, stupid."

A vicious grin broke onto his face. "Make me, idiot."

So Karl did.

He grabbed hold of the collar of his shirt and pulled him in so fast their teeth clacked together painfully. They let out bubbles of laughter as they struggled to find their rhythm, but eventually their mouths slotted together as if they had been sculpted to fit the other, and Karl felt himself melting against him.

The kiss was innocent, and Karl had been waiting so long for this that now that it was happening, he didn't mind taking his time. Sapnap's arms had snaked around the small of his back, pulling him in to where their bodies were flush against each other as Karl's fingers found tufts of Sapnap's hair. They had to pull back, because the two had started smiling so wide that the kiss broke anyway, and now they looked at each other with giddy smiles as giggles continued pouring out of the two.

Just as they were leaning in for another the door burst open, making them turn to the doorway to see George standing there, his mouth falling slack as he took in their current position. Before Karl could say anything, Sapnap was letting out a frustrated groan.

"Not now, Gogy, can't you see I'm finally getting some action here? I've only been waiting years for this, so shoo, shoo," Sapnap waved him away, and as George let out a strangled "sorry" before shutting the door quickly, Karl couldn't help but burst out laughing, Sapnap joining in not too long after.

"Oh my god, dude, did you see his face?" Sapnap let out between laughs.

"He was like-" Karl imitated George's petrified expression, albeit more exaggerated, and it only made Sapnap laugh harder, Karl joining him just as loudly.

"I like your laugh," Sapnap smiled honestly and suddenly, making Karl sober up and stare at him in surprise.

"You do?"

"Yeah. If Pennywise and Spongebob had a child, they would have your laugh."

"What!" Karl gasped in mock offense as he hit Sapnap's shoulder, the other backing away from his blow with a cackle. Karl started giggling, though, and it made them laugh harder when they both realized there was some truth to Sapnap's statement.

Once they calmed down, Sapnap grabbed hold of Karl's hands again, intertwining their fingers and making Karl grin like an idiot.

"Hey Karl."

"Yeah, Sap?"

"Will you be my boyfriend?"

"You make fun of my laugh and then ask to be my boyfriend? You really know how to get a guy."

"I was kidding! I like your laugh, honest!" Sapnap whined, making Karl giggle again. "Come on, Karl, please?"

Karl's cheeks were hurting from how big he was smiling. "Hm, I don't know, are there any benefits that come out of it or...?"

"Shut up, you idiot," Sapnap barked out a laugh, but he quickly shut up when Karl pulled him in to gently press another kiss on his lips.

"I guess I'll be your boyfriend," Karl snickered once he pulled back, and then started laughing when Sapnap tackled him in a hug, the two losing their balance and toppling to the floor in a tangle of limbs.

As Karl looked up at his new boyfriend, who was now pinning him to the floor with a dashing smile lighting up his features, he felt his heart drumming happily in his ears, his stomach doing somersaults in the best way possible. And as Sapnap leaned down to kiss Karl again, he was unable to wipe the grin off his face as he felt his heart soar.

Although neither said it out loud, that was the moment they both came to the realization that they had fallen in love with each other, their hearts drumming inside their chest to the beat of their own song.

## Chapter End Notes

shorter chapter since it's a filler :] Karlnap is finally canon wooo!!!

Prepare yourselves for some Gogy POV next chapter ;) another update should be out in the next two weeks!

Love and appreciate every one of you so much, hoping you are all well <3

- Kirbs -

## Chapter 24

### Chapter Summary

George POV on the kiss, and Dream POV on their first meeting :]

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Holy fuck.

Holy fuck.

Holy fuck.

His mind had short circuited into chanting the same two words over and over like a mantra the second Clay's eyes slid down to George's mouth.

His brain wasn't working, he wasn't in control of his movements, all he could comprehend clearly was the voice in his head screaming, "Holy fuck!"

He hadn't even realized when he had shifted forward the slightest bit. Clay was a mere breath away from him, and George had moved even closer to him.

Holy. Fuck.

If his brain had been short circuiting before, the moment Clay met him halfway and their lips brushed together, his brain might have just died. There were explosions going off in his mind, and when he subconsciously pressed his lips onto Clay's the slightest bit, the other drawing back in shock at the action, he didn't even think twice as he chased after him to kiss him again.

And Clay kissed him back. And god, it wasn't even a great kiss, their lips were practically just pressing against the other's, but the emotions it set off in his stomach, his chest, his mind, was beyond compare. It was like nothing George had ever experienced before, and a part of him was sure that nothing else would ever be able to compare to that moment.

Holy fuck he was going to die from a heart attack. And that was fine with him. At least he would pass away feeling like the luckiest guy on earth.

Quite reluctantly he pulled back first, if not only due to the absolute shock that was frying his brain cells as he tried to comprehend what the fuck had just happened.

He openly gaped at Clay who was looking at him with a nervous expression, his golden eyes blown wide and his face flushed in a way that made his freckles pop and holy fuck, he looked so adorable in that moment that George wanted to kiss him all over again.

"What was-" he started, at the same time Clay said, "George, I-"

They both fell silent, and then they both said, "You first." And as a bashful smile stretched onto Clay's face, George could've sworn his heart actually jumped into his throat with the sole purpose

of strangling him.

Holy fuck. Holy fuck he's so cute.

Just as he was about to open his mouth and possibly squawk out something embarrassing, the door to the room swung open, hitting the wall and rattling him back to the reality that he was casually lying in a hospital bed with another guy after having just kissed him.

He practically vaulted into the air, letting out a barely audible "Holy fuck!" as he scrambled away from Clay, rolling right off the bed and landing as a tangle of limbs on the cold, marble floor. He dared shoot a glance at the door to see Sapnap standing there, staring at the two with wide eyes.

"Um...Am I interrupting something?"

"No!" George screeched out at the same time Clay did, which only made Sapnap's eyes widen further before narrowing into slits, clearly not buying it. Without a second thought George shot up from the floor, his face burning as he booked it to the door and into the hallway, not daring a glance back at either of them.

He wouldn't even know what to do or say because his mind was back to the incoherent mess of repeated holy fuck, holy fuck, holy fucks.



George barely processed leaving the hospital.

One moment he was sitting in the hallway, blankly staring at the wall ahead of him as Sapnap and Wilbur indulged in a heated argument about whether arson or TNT explosives would be a more fun way to destroy a nation, Karl chiming in rarely and George not chiming in at all, the next he was standing in front of Clay's mother, trying not to die inside as she asked him a simple enough question that somehow still managed to send his heart into panic, the next he was walking beside Clay, not knowing what to say and not even daring to look in his direction, and then he was saying goodbye to him, pretending there was no current of tension tethering them to each other as he turned to walk after Karl and Sapnap and out the door.

And next thing he knew, he was sitting shotgun in Karl's car, staring out the window at the scenery zipping past him, lost in his own thoughts.

And the entire time his mind continued its chant of holy fucks.

Even when the car swerved suddenly and sent his forehead slamming against the window, he was only able to shriek out a strangled "Holy fuck!" in reaction.

God, this was starting to get embarrassing.

He tried to focus on something else, like the way Karl seemed to be acting not at all like himself, but his mind kept dragging him back to the feeling of an uncomfortable hospital bed and soft lips against his.



The afternoon was a blur.

They got to Karl's house and immediately got to work on their speech project, not leaving much room for thoughts that didn't involve felines, the topic of their speech. Still, somehow, his mind would randomly pull up the memory again, like, "Hey, here's your reminder that a few hours ago you kissed Clay! That's all, proceed!" It would catch him off guard every time and leave George extremely flustered as he attempted to hide his reddening face from the other two boys. Apparently he would get a constipated look on his face, too, and was called out on it by Sapnap numerous times, but he would merely blame the growing bruise on his forehead (that didn't actually hurt all that much) and get away with it.

After eating dinner with Karl's mom and brother, the three began making their way back up to Karl's room when George's phone suddenly started ringing in his back pocket. He jumped in surprise, the sound pulling him out of his scrambled thoughts as he retrieved it to glance at the screen.

His eyes widened slightly as he read the contact name, glancing up to see Karl and Sapnap watching him curiously a few steps above him.

"I'm, uh, going to take this outside," George sputtered out without thinking, already taking a step back down the stairs. "I'll be with you guys in a second." And with that he turned to take the stairs two at a time back down and head to the front entrance of the house, leaving Karl and Sapnap confused on the stairs.

Once he made it outside and closed the door behind him, he swiped the screen and brought the phone up to his ear.

"George!" a familiar voice with a strong accent shouted into his ear.

"Minx!" he shouted back. "Holy fuck!"

"Holy fuck!" she echoed, before pausing. "...holy fuck what?"

"You'll never guess what happened," George lowered his voice, glancing back inside the house to make sure nobody was listening in.

"What? What happened? Are you pregnant?"

"Am I- What?!" George squawked in surprise, making Minx burst out laughing on the other side.

"Minx, who is that? You're being so loud," he heard a familiar voice giggle in the background at the other end of the line. A slow smile crept onto George's face.

"Put me on speaker," George grinned as he heard Minx scoff.

"Fuck off, I'm not putting you on speaker," she hissed before her voice seemed to become more distant, as if she were facing away from the phone's speaker. "It's George. He's pregnant."

"Stop it, no I'm not," George laughed softly, and he could hear the pair giggling on the other end.

"It's the pregnancy hormones."



"Minx!"

The two on the other end were outright laughing now, making George huff in exasperation despite the smile tugging at his lips.

"Hi, George!" the second voice said now.

George grinned. "Hey, Niki."

"So who's the father?"

"Not you too," George sighed dramatically, making Niki giggle.

"Ok, shoo, Niki. I have to talk to Gogy," Minx suddenly spoke up. George perked up at the nickname.

"Gogy?" he heard Niki echo with a smile evident in her voice before George could. Minx shouted a few less than appropriate words at her before Niki left with a shouted goodbye at George.

"Wow. You really know how to get a girl," George drawled sarcastically, making Minx let out a strangled sound as aggressive tapping sounded on the other end.

"I had you on speaker!!" Minx whisper yelled, which made George burst out laughing despite himself.

"You actually put me on speaker? You said you weren't going to!"

"Shut up, asshole!"

George continued to laugh loudly, Minx joining in not too long after. Once the two had calmed down, George could already feel a lot more at ease, an easy smile playing on his lips as he leaned his back on the door behind him.

"So what happened, Gogy?"

George snorted. "Where did you even get Gogy from?"

He could hear Minx smiling. "Sapnap's nickname for you has spread like wildfire, but that's irrelevant. Tell me already, dammit!"

"You need to guess."

"George!"

"Alright! Alright, fine!" George rolled his eyes fondly before dropping his gaze to stare at a yellow flower growing out of a crack on the cement beside his feet. His expression softened as he was reminded of golden eyes. "Okay, so, Clay messed up his ankle right."

"Right."

"So me, Sapnap, Karl and Wilbur took him to the hospital."

"Why didn't you just take him to the school nurse first?"

"We kind of panicked, okay? So anyways..." George went on to explain everything leading up to

him ending up laying down side by side with Clay on the small hospital bed, Minx growing more and more irritating as he told the story.

"Oh my god, did you two fuck?"

"Minx! No! Why would you even say that?!" George squeaked out as he willed any sort of imagery out of his head. Minx was cackling on the other end, making George let out a frustrated groan. "Will you let me tell the story?"

"Okay, okay, sorry. So?"

"So," George paused, pursing his lips as he willed his heart rate to slow as the memory was brought back to the front of his mind full force. He closed his eyes. "We kissed."

"Holy fuck!" Minx shouted on the other end, and there was the sound of something heavy falling followed by a sharp yelp. George had to hold back a laugh when he realized Minx had fallen off wherever she was just sitting. "No way! You guys kissed?!"

"Y-Yeah! We did," George was giggling now, and he felt so giddy all of a sudden that he couldn't help it. "It wasn't like a super long kiss but...yeah. He kissed me."

"That's amazing! So he likes you back!" he could hear Minx grinning widely, but all of a sudden her words made George's own smile drop, a sudden wave of insecurity crashing into him.

"I, um," he stammered, not feeling so giddy anymore. "I don't know that...though."

Minx's voice sounded confused. "What the fuck do you mean you don't know that? He kissed you so he clearly likes you."

"Well yeah, he did kiss me but...I don't know. He was on pain killers and might have not been thinking straight. Or maybe it was just spur of the moment and it didn't mean anything to him-"

"George, are you fucking serious-"

"And besides, even if it did, I can't- we couldn't-" George let out a frustrated breath as he roughly raked his hand through his hair, pulling it as he felt frustrated tears begin to collect at the corner of his eyes. Minx had grown quiet on the other end as he continued. "I told you before, I didn't want to tell him how I felt because if there was even the slightest possibility he liked me back, I wouldn't be able to...to give him everything he deserves to have in a partner. For 6 months maybe I could, but after that? Once I have to go back to living in the UK? What then? It would be too painful for him, for the both of us, that I just- I just don't want to put him through that, Minx."

"George..." Minx whispered on the other end. George shut his eyes tight, letting out a shaky breath as his heart continued to pound painfully against his chest.

Softly, he admitted, "I don't want to be put through that. Having him, and then having to give him up."

Minx stayed quiet for a moment longer before she muttered, "Dammit, I really wish I could hug you through this stupid phone right now."

George let out a short laugh in surprise, rubbing at his eyes tiredly. "You can hug me tomorrow, Minx."

"Write it down on paper because I'll hold you up to that," Minx joked before her voice softened a

bit. "I understand your worries. Long distance is fucking tough, there's no sugarcoating it. But I think you shouldn't throw away this opportunity either. George, Clay likes you. It's so damn obvious. And I know how much you like him."

"Only a little bit, don't exaggerate," George mumbled, Minx calling bullshit and making George let out a soft laugh again.

"I don't think you should self sabotage so soon. 6 months is still some ways to go, so don't throw away something that will make the both of you so happy now for just- moving up the heartbreak 6 months early."

George remained silent, letting Minx's words sink in. She had an air of truth to what she was saying and she made a good point, but George still felt sick to his stomach whenever he would even begin to imagine of having to leave Clay by the end of it.

"I'll think about it," he spoke softly, his mind still in turmoil over what he should decide to do. Heartbreak now, or heartbreak 6 months into the future? Oh, the choices.

"You better think about it, and don't just jump towards whatever's easy, alright?" Minx scolded him softly. "You deserve happiness, too."

George smiled softly as he dropped his head in gratitude. "Thanks, Minx."

"No problem. I have to go now, I just wanted to call you to check in since I had heard what happened to Clay."

"Thanks for checking in. Bye, Minx."

"Bye, Gogy!"

The call ended as George dropped his hand, sighing and turning to stare at the sky above him. As a bit of wind picked up, he let his eyes flutter shut while letting out a long sigh.

He was going to have a lot of thinking to do.

He let himself back inside, locking the door behind him before heading towards the stairs. He practically dragged himself up them, his mind still spinning with indecision. As he neared Karl's bedroom he stopped in his tracks, hearing giggling coming from inside of the room. Curiously, he opened the door to the room only to stop in his tracks, his mouth falling slack at the sight before him.

Sapnap's arms were wrapped around Karl's waist bringing him flush against his chest while Karl's hands were perched on Sapnap's shoulders. He appeared to be leaning down into the space of the other, moments away from sucking face. They pulled apart a bit when they noticed George's entrance, and George watched as Karl's face went beet red while Sapnap let out a frustrated groan.

"Not now, Gogy, can't you see I'm finally getting some action here? I've only been waiting years for this, so shoo, shoo," Sapnap waved him away, George's face quickly flushing in embarrassment.

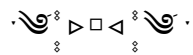
"Sorry," he choked out, his voice sounding strangled as he quickly shut the door again. He stared in shock at the now closed door as he heard Karl burst out laughing inside the room, Sapnap joining in not too long after.

"Holy fuck," he whispered to himself while turning away from the door to walk back down the hall

in a daze. Once his mind finally processed what he had just seen, and after the initial horror of having walked in on two of his friends seconds away from kissing had dissipated, a small smile slipped onto his face as he glanced back at Karl's room down the hall. He thought of Karl laughing inside the room and grinned even wider.

He was relieved things had finally worked out for him and Sapnap. It made him think, was this a sign that he should go for it with Clay?

Either way, he was just glad that Karl appeared to be back to normal, to the person he had grown to love like family.



"Do you need help, Clay?"

"No, I got it."

Clay got out of his mom's car, smiling at Wilbur who had offered to help lead him inside. He positioned the crutches he would be forced to use the next couple of weeks under his arms and began making his way inside the house.

"Welcome back, cripple," a familiar voice said once he made it into the kitchen. Clay's smile instantly dropped as his eyes shot towards Drista, who was seated at the table doing her homework, a playful grin on her face. He stared at her silently, making her smile waver as she now gave him a questioning look.

"Catherine, where's your brother?" his mom interrupted their staring, Drista finally looking away from Clay to acknowledge their mother.

"He's upstairs building a town or something out of his legos. He called it Manberg-"

"L'manberg!" corrected the voice of his little brother Colton from upstairs. Clay couldn't help but crack a smile.

"L'manberg, interesting," Wilbur grinned as he made his way to the stairs. "I'll go check on him."

"Oh, mom, I needed help on this problem-" Drista started once Wilbur left the room, but his mother cut her off.

"Sorry, sweetie, I have to go on an errand right now. Why don't you try asking Clay for some help?" his mother offered as she turned to grab her bag again and head for the garage. Clay felt his heart sink.

"Wait, mom-"

"I'll be back in a bit. Love you two. And Clay, be careful with your leg," his mother cut him off, her last remark making him wince and steal a glance at Drista, who was now watching him intently. They echoed goodbyes as she left through the garage door where their mom's car was parked.

"Sit your ass down and help me," Drista spoke up, pointing at a chair beside her.

"Hey, language," Clay scolded her weakly as he awkwardly moved to flop down on the chair, setting his crutches to a side.

"Help me."

"What do you need help with?"

"Math stuff."

"Gross," Clay made a face at the page of equations Drista was working on. Drista nodded solemnly.

"Agreed. How's your foot?" she added as if an afterthought. Clay stiffened at the question, shooting a glance at her.

"Fine. It's not a big deal, it's just a small injury," Clay reassured quickly. Drista raised an unconvinced brow.

"Right. That's why you're in a cast and walking around with crutches."

"Seriously, I'm fine. It's nothing compared to what you-" Clay's voice died in his throat as he realized what he was about to blurt out.

It's nothing compared to what you had to go through.

Drista must've caught on to the end of his sentence because her expression instantly darkened. "What the hell, Clay."

"Sorry, I shouldn't have said that," Clay muttered, not able to meet her scowl.

"Yeah, you shouldn't have. Because you can't compare our accidents. They are totally different situations."

Clay dropped his head. "I know that. I'm sorry, it was insensitive of me to compare-"

"No, stupid, you're not getting what I'm saying," Drista groaned in frustration, lightly slapping her hand on the top of his head, making him finally look at her in surprise. "I meant it as in, they are two circumstances completely unrelated to each other, but they both made people worried, and they both deserved attention and care."

Clay furrowed his brows. "I don't follow."

"What I mean is, yes, what happened in the accident was bad. I mean, I practically have a robot leg now, though it has grown on me. It's actually pretty cool, if I'm being honest," Drista grinned while patting her prosthetic fondly. Clay refused to look at it as he felt his gut churn. "And it made people worried, and it meant I needed to be cared for for some time, yada yada. But just because my injury was objectively worse than yours doesn't mean we now are going to ignore your freaking fractured ankle, Clay."

"That's not-"

"Wait," Drista cut in as she seemed to come to a realization, her eyes going wide in disbelief. "Is that why you didn't tell anyone?" Clay grimaced.

"Um..."

"Oh my god, Clay. I knew you were stupid, but I didn't think you were this stupid," Drista poked his forehead as Clay batted her away.

"What the hell, I'm not-"

"But you are!" Drista exclaimed, cutting him off again. She really needed to stop doing that. "You idiot- just because you thought your injury didn't deserve to be complained about because of what I went through doesn't mean you keep it to yourself and suck it up when clearly it hadn't healed. This is why you have a fractured ankle now, you dumbo."

Clay remained quiet, staring at his fingers fiddling atop the kitchen table. Drista gently nudged his fiddling hands with her own.

"The accident wasn't your fault." Clay flinched at Drista's stern words, as if what she was saying was a fact. "I don't blame you. I've forgiven you, too. It was called an accident for a reason, and honestly, the only thing I'm mad at you for now is the way you keep treating me as if I'm some fragile doll that's going to break at any second."

Clay whipped his head back up to meet her gaze. "I don't treat you like you're a fragile doll." Drista shot him an unconvinced look.

"Every time you look at my prosthetic, if you look at it at all because I can tell when you're trying to avoid looking at it, you make this face like if you chopped it off yourself. You don't let me go to your football games probably because you think it'll just make me feel bad about myself that I can't play sports anymore. You won't tell me your ankle is killing you because you think I will tell you you have nothing to complain about- like c'mon!" Drista threw her hands up in exasperation before dropping them on the table, letting out a frustrated sigh. She met his gaze again, her face softening. "You need to stop looking at me like if the accident happened yesterday. Clay, it's been months. You need to move on and accept what happened instead of wishing it never did, because that won't change the past. I've learned how to live with this prosthetic, now you have to learn to live with it, too."

Clay stared at her, stunned. His throat had run dry, but even if he could speak, he wouldn't have known what to say. Drista moved to punch his shoulder lightly, almost as if to lift the heavy air weighing over the two of them.

"Just, quit treating me as if I'm different. I just want you to treat me like how you used to- like before everything happened. Because really, I'm not different, you know? I'm still the same 'Drista' I was before."

A tense silence stretched between them before Clay suddenly reached forward and brought in his sister for a hug, wrapping his arms around her small frame and squeezing her tightly. After a moments delay Drista returned the hug, burying her face into his shoulder. It was a bit of an uncomfortable hug considering they were both still seated on their respective chairs, but they made it work.

"I'm so sorry I made you feel like that. I was so blinded by my own guilt that I didn't even realize I may be hurting you by acting this way," Clay murmured into her hair. He could feel Drista smile softly into his shoulder.

"It's alright, Clay. I just hope you're able to forgive yourself soon, because everyone else has already forgiven you."

Tears welled up in Clay's eyes at his little sister's reassurance, and he was reminded of what

George told him the night of the party.

"I hope one day you come to accept that it really wasn't your fault. You deserve to forgive yourself, because I'm sure everyone else has already forgiven you," George had told him then. And now his sister had confirmed to him that everyone had already forgiven him, and all of a sudden, all the feelings related to the accident that he had been keeping at bay came pouring out as hot tears rolled down his cheeks and into his sister's hair. He hugged her tighter, being reminded of the way he had also been hugging George that night in the woods behind Karl's house.

Back then, he wasn't so sure that day would ever come for him. But right now, in his little sister's arms, he could finally see it, he could finally see self forgiveness ahead of him, maybe even in the near future.

He let out a deep sigh as he further relaxed into Drista's arms, a smile slowly making itself at home on his tear-stained face as a feeling of relief washed over him.

Everything would finally be okay.

"Hey, are you still having those nightmares?" Drista spoke up after a few moments. Clay released her from the hug to face her head on.

"Some nights I do."

"When's the last time you had a nightmare?"

Clay racked his brain to recall the last time he had a nightmare about the car accident, his dream forcing him to relive the painful events that affected his sister forever. "I think it was last week, Monday night. You woke up and checked on me that time."

"You haven't had any since?"

"No, I haven't," Clay realized. "And I used to have them almost every night."

Drista was smiling incredibly wide at him, her eyes twinkling with delight. "That's so great, Clay. I hope this means you won't have them anymore, or at least not as often as before."

Clay smiled back at her.

"I hope so too."



After about an hour of helping his little sister with her math homework, Clay was lying down on his bed, staring at the ceiling in deep thought.

He was thinking of George, of his sister, of his stupid choices and his stupid injury, when Wilbur knocked on his bedroom door, pulling him out of his thoughts as he glanced at the doorway where the other boy was standing.

"Hey," Clay called out to him with a grin. Wilbur returned the smile as he invited himself into the room, moving to sit beside where Clay was lying down, the bed dipping a bit with his weight. The two boys remained quiet for a moment before Wilbur spoke up first.

"I heard you finally talked to your sister about it."

Clay's eyes flicked to Wilbur's quickly as Wilbur raised his hands a bit. "I wasn't eavesdropping, I didn't hear the whole conversation. Your sister is just pretty loud and I could hear bits and pieces of it from upstairs."

"Oh. Yeah, she can be loud," Clay chuckled fondly, turning his attention back to the ceiling. "Honestly, it feels like a burden has been lifted from my shoulders. That talk was long overdue."

Wilbur smiled at him, playfully ruffling his hair with his hand. "I'm proud of you, Clay."

"Thanks, Wil."

A silence stretched between the two, but it wasn't uncomfortable. In fact it was welcome, and Clay was thankful of Wilbur for just being there.

"How have things with George been?"

Clay felt his heart stutter at Wilbur's sudden question. "Fine."

"Just fine?"

"Well..." Clay debated telling him what happened at the hospital. Would it be alright to tell him? It was just Wilbur, and he knew he could trust him. "Okay, you have to promise not to tell anyone."

"Cross my heart," Wilbur responded, making an x over where his heart is. Clay avoided looking at him as he took in a deep breath, feeling his face quickly growing warm.

"Well, at the hospital, I kinda..." Clay brought his hands up to cover his red face. "Kissed. Him."

A silence stretched, and Clay snuck a peak from behind his fingers to find Wilbur gaping at him.

"How did he react?" Wilbur asked, his voice sounding genuinely surprised.

"He, um, he kissed me back so-"

"No way!" Wilbur exclaimed, startling Clay a bit. "Clay, this is huge!"

"It is?"

"Yes! It is!" Wilbur had jumped off the bed now as Clay moved to sit upright, watching him with puzzlement evident in his expression. Wilbur turned to him with a megawatt smile. "Clay, remember how I told you he's never been in a relationship before?"

"Yeah?"

"Well, he hasn't kissed anyone before, either." Clay's eyes widened as the realization hit him, Wilbur's smile only growing. "Clay...you're George's first kiss."

"You kissed George?!"

Clay felt his heart stop at the unexpected voice, his eyes shooting to the doorway where he hadn't realized Drista was standing, a shocked smile lighting up her face.

"You were eavesdropping?!" Clay pointed at her as he felt his face go bright red again.



"You like boys?!" she retaliated, pointing at him almost accusingly.

"No- Well, I-I guess-?"

"How did this happen? Where? When? Tell me everything right now!" Drista demanded as she stomped into the room and nearly tackled his brother on the bed, a wicked grin still present on her face. Clay gave her a nervous smile.

"I, uh...it's kind of a long story..." Clay tried, searching for an excuse to not tell her anything. But he knew his sister and she was as stubborn as him, maybe even more so.

"I have time. Spill!" Drista shook him by the shoulders as if that would get the answer to her questions out of him. Clay darted a look at Wilbur, pleading with his eyes that he do something about her, but he was watching the two with amusement lighting up his features, the traitor.

"Fine, fine, let me go," Clay sighed in defeat, and she finally stopped shaking him to sit cross crossed beside him on Clay's bed.

"So..." Drista egged him on. Clay made a face at her.

"So...I like George."

"And George likes him back," Wilbur added. Clay turned to look at him.

"Well, no. I don't know that for sure." Wilbur stared at him as if he had just grown two heads.

"Clay, with all due respect, but if you think George doesn't have feelings for you after you two kissed? Then you are a fucking idiot."

"Get his ass, Wilbur," Drista reached out her hand towards him, Wilbur high-fiving her.

"Hey!" Clay let out, offended.

"It needed to be said, big bro. You are a bit of a moron sometimes," Drista patted his shoulder lightly, and then let out a laugh when Clay pushed her sideways.

"I've actually been meaning to ask, when did you realize you liked George? Did you even know you liked guys before?" Wilbur asked curiously. Clay thought about it for a moment.

"Honestly...I didn't know. Like, before George, I would see guys that were objectively attractive and think, yeah, that guy is hot. But I never questioned that because I had only been emotionally attracted to girls up to that point, if that makes sense?" Clay began, leaning back a bit on his hands. Drista and Wilbur watched him intently as he continued. "And honestly, I think maybe that's why it took me so long to figure out that what I felt for George was far from platonic. At one point I kind of started to figure it out, but I was in denial, you know? I think the day of my football game, when I saw George in the stands- that's when I realized, fuck. I'm in way too deep."

"But then, when do you think it started?" Drista questioned. Before Clay could even think of a response, his little brother Colton ran into the room, making the three of their mouths instantly shut closed.

"Clayyy!" he cried loudly. "I'm sooo hungry! I'm on the verge of dying!" Colton complained dramatically as he let his face drop onto Clay's bed. Clay let out a fond chuckle, ruffling his light brown hair.

"Oh no, we don't want that. Let's go get you something to eat, then," Clay humored him, making Colton cheer before grabbing Wilbur's hand to drag him out of the room with him. He caught Wilbur flashing him an amused smile just before the two were out the room and heading downstairs.

"Let's go, you must be hungry, too," Clay told his sister as he got off the bed, grabbing for his crutches that were resting on his bed. He helped Drista jump off as well, and as he briefly glanced at her prosthetic leg, he realized his gut wasn't twisting as much as it usually did.

Progress.

"Oh, and Clay," Drista spoke up as the two headed out of his room. "You don't have to worry about me telling mom. You'll tell her when you're ready."

Clay brought her in for a side hug, flashing her a grateful smile before she was walking away from him and down the stairs. The question she had asked him earlier echoed in his mind as he watched her go.

"When do you think it started?"

His feelings for George had caught him so off guard that Clay honestly didn't know.

"Do you need help going down the stairs?" Drista reappeared at the top of the stairs, an amused look on her face. Clay huffed out a laugh.

"Blind leading the blind?" Clay joked.

"Do you want my help or not."

"Yes, please."



[ 8 days prior ]  
Sunday, 8:29 am

One moment he was arguing with his girlfriend on the phone, the next the car was suspended in the air.

It flipped once, twice, three times. Clay lost count as he braced for each impact, a scream getting caught in his throat and refusing to be heard. He could hear the blood curling screams of someone else though, and he knew all too well who they belonged to.

"Clay!" his sister was screaming as he shut his eyes tight, unable to rewatch how everything would play out. His world was spinning, every bit of his body was aching, his ears were ringing and it seemed like the car would never stop flipping over-

"Clay! Wake up!" his sister was shaking him by the shoulders when he finally came to from his nightmare, feeling sweat sticking to every inch of his body. The sun was filtering in through his window as he squinted to focus on Drista's face hovering above him. "Mom says you're going to be

late!"

"Late? For what? I don't have school today..." Clay groaned as he turned away from her, his throat feeling scratchy and his eyes stinging. Drista flipped him back around.

"It's Sunday, Clay."

"Exactly. Your point?"

Drista smacked his forehead a little too harshly. "The exchange students arrive at the airport today!"

Clay blinked once. Twice. Then his stomach dropped.

"Oh, shit-" he lurched into a sitting position and stumbled out of bed, Drista just barely moving out of the way to avoid getting trampled by him.

"Oh shit is right," she agreed, making Clay turn to glare at her, pointing a finger at her.

"Hey. Do not repeat that," he warned before he turned to run out of the room and into the bathroom to take a quick shower. The water was ice cold leaving Clay shivering, but he powered through it like a champ and got back out in just a few minutes, getting the first article of clothing he could find, which ended up being his favorite green hoodie and a pair of jeans.

"I'm leaving to pick up Wilbur, mom!" he called out once he had gone back downstairs to get his car keys. He didn't even wait for a response before he was dashing out the house and climbing into his car. It wasn't until 20 minutes later he was finally arriving, rushing into the immense airport and trying not to panic as he ran towards what he hoped was the right direction.

He was running blindly without really being careful of where he was going when he realized too late he was about to run right into someone. He braced himself for impact as he collided into another body, sending the other flying backwards and to the ground as they let out a small shriek, Clay falling down after him.

Before he knew it, he was pinning a stranger to the ground, his hands on either side of his head as he stared down at a boy with wide eyes.

The boy that was under him blinked up at him in surprise as Clay scrambled to get off of him.

"Oh shit, I am so so so sorry," Clay apologized quickly. "I shouldn't have been running, I'm just late to pick up the family I'm supposed to be hosting and- wait, why am I even telling a stranger this. He doesn't care, shut up," he started muttering to himself without thinking as he finally got on his feet, shaking his head at his own rambling and dusting himself off. He ignored the heat rising in his cheeks as he glanced back down at the boy he had practically tackled.

He had brown messy hair that looked incredibly soft, very pale skin, and big, brown eyes that were still staring up at him in shock. He wore a blue sweater and dark blue jeans, and although he appeared to be around his age, the boy was visibly much smaller than him.

He was cute.

Clay realized he was staring so he outstretched his hand, offering to help the boy up. After a moments hesitation, the other took it and Clay hoisted him back to his feet.

"Thanks, and I should've been paying attention to where I was going, too," the boy said in a British

accent that caught Clay off guard. He quickly shook his head to recover.

"No way, my fault," Clay insisted, his hand reaching up to ruffle his hair a bit sheepishly.

"Oh, Clay!" another voice perked up suddenly, and when Clay turned towards it he finally noticed Karl standing there, grinning widely at him. His face lit up in recognition.

"Karl! Hey dude, how has your break been."

"It's been good, especially now since, you know, I'm picking up the kid I'm going to be hosting," Karl explained as he pointed in the boy's direction, who made a face at the 'kid' bit.

"Oh, so you are one of the exchange students," Clay noted, his eyes dragging up and down his body without thinking. "Explains the accent."

I like it, he didn't say.

"Yeah, this is georgenotfound," Karl stated as he wrapped an arm over "Georgenotfound's" shoulder. The other seemed to tense a bit at the action.

"Georgenotfound?" Clay repeated, his smile widening more so as he glanced at the boy in amusement. The boy's face flushed adorably in embarrassment.

"He got that from my email. It's just George," George waved him off quickly as Clay's amused grin only broadened.

"Okay, georgenotfound. Since I'm meeting you, doesn't it mean you are found, though?" Clay joked lamely, making George let out a huff in exasperation, the sound pulling a chuckle out of Clay. "I'm Clay."

"Nice to meet you, too, Clay," George drawled sarcastically, making Clay let out a short laugh, caught off guard by this boy's sass. He could tell George was fighting back a smile, which only further broadened his own.

"Hey Clay, where's the student you're supposed to be hosting?" Karl asked suddenly, and Clay felt his heart drop at the reminder.

"Shit! Right, that's what I was doing! Agggghhh I am so late and I keep getting sidetracked-" Clay screeched as he began running down the hall again. He glanced back to quickly shout, "See you guys! And nice to meet you, georgenotfound!"

"It's George!" he heard George yell back, which made Clay let out a loud wheeze in surprise. His heart was drumming wildly inside his chest, a stupid grin making itself at home on his flushed face as he continued running in the direction he needed to pick up Wilbur.

Back then he had blamed the racing heart, the heat on his face, the permanent smile etched into his features on the rush of the run, but what he didn't realize was that was the moment it had all started for him.

## Chapter End Notes

HEY HEY HEY HOW'S EVERYONE DOING :D

Longer chapter to make up for lack of updates :] hope you all enjoyed!

Also, I was thinking of making a spotify playlist for songs that remind me of this fic, would anyone be interested in it? Let me know!

Hope your day/night has been great, take care of yourselves, I love you all <3

- Kirbs -

## Chapter 25

### Chapter Summary

in a sleepless night, the boys decide to play Minecraft together

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was deep into the night, around midnight to be exact, and George, Sapnap and Karl were sprawled on the floor of Karl's bedroom with every pillow they could find scattered about. The lights were turned off and the door shut to not disturb the rest of Karl's family (which thankfully, according to Karl slept like dead people, so very little would manage to wake them), the only source of light coming in through the open window at the back of the room where the moon was visible, casting a warm glow onto every corner of the room it could reach. They were technically supposed to be asleep by now because they had school in the morning (not to mention a speech presentation), but Sapnap and Karl had been too giddy about finally becoming an item that they decided to stay up.

George was the unfortunate third wheel that was forced to keep awake with them.

"Aren't you two tired?" George let out a long yawn after Sapnap finished recounting another scary story that had Karl curling up to his side, his blanket brought up to his chin as he attempted to hide the fearful yelps he would let out any time Sapnap tried to startle him with his expressive storytelling.

"You can go to sleep, Georgie, you don't have to stay up with us," Karl offered with an apologetic smile. George let out a soft huff and shook his head.

"No way. If you two are staying up then so am I. What if I go to sleep and you two decide to jump each other's bone's or something-"

"George!" Karl squeaked out, his face going a bright red in an instant, visible even in the dark, while Sapnap burst out into hysterics beside him. Karl turned to try to shush the shorter boy by slapping his hand over Sapnap's mouth, but that only made Karl let out a fond string of giggles as he watched Sapnap continue to lose his collective shit except now muffled by his hand. George let out a few chuckles at the pair, his sleepy eyes dragging between the two leaning against each other with a fond smile.

When Karl and Sapnap told George they had confessed to each other and had made it official between them, George had not been surprised in the slightest. He knew Karl liked Sapnap, who in turn made it pretty obvious that the feeling was mutual, so he was honestly more surprised that it took so long for them to figure it out.

Also, he had literally walked in on them about to make out, so the news was more of an explanation than anything.

Sapnap's phone started buzzing beside him suddenly and he sobered up from his laughter to glance at the screen, the light emanating from it lighting up his features and making his eyes squint

as he attempted to adjust to the brightness. His eyes shot to George, an amused look on his face as he swiped to answer the call before tapping something on his phone screen. "You do know it's like, almost one in the morning right?"

"Says you," a familiar voice that sounded a bit husky from sleep (or lack thereof) came from the phone's speaker. George felt his heart hiccup into his throat.

"Your voice sounds hot right now, did you just wake up or something?" Sapnap whispered loudly enough for the other two boys to hear, and then started cackling when Karl slapped his chest despite the amused giggles he let out. The person on the call chuckled lowly, and something curled in George's gut as he turned to instead stare at a corner of the room.

"Yeah, um. I did. I couldn't sleep. I had a, uh..." the person trailed off, and something in Sapnap's expression shifted as he tapped at his screen to turn off the phone's speaker.

"Are you okay?" Sapnap asked in a concerned voice this time, his eyebrows knotting together in worry. There was a response that George could not hear and after several moments of silence, Sapnap dropped his head a bit. "Alright. Sure, man. Want to log on for a bit? I'll ask Karl."

"Ask me what?" Karl asked, lifting his head from where he had started to doze off slightly on Sapnap's shoulder.

"Clay wants to play Minecraft for a bit."

"Wait, right now?" Karl asked in surprise. Sapnap nodded, and something unspoken passed between the two before Karl's brows furrowed a bit. "Alright."

Sapnap put Clay back on speaker before saying, "You're lucky Karl is a rich kid and has like, three set ups because I'm not home right now."

"You're sleeping over? You dog," Clay said teasingly, and Sapnap chuckled as he snuggled closer to Karl, who flashed him a happy grin.

"Oh man, I have so much to catch you up on."

"George, do you play Minecraft?" Karl turned to address the Brit. His gaze snapped back from staring at something across the room to meet two pairs of eyes staring at him intently.

"Uh, yeah. I play," George stammered out nervously.

"George is there?" Clay's voice came from the phone, and for some reason the acknowledgement alone made heat begin to pool on George's face. His mind teleported him back to the feeling of an uncomfortable hospital bed, the smell of chlorine stinging his nostrils and Clay's soft breath fanning his lips.

He willed the memory away.

"He's staying at Karl's house, idiot, of course he's here," Sapnap snickered as Clay began stammering on the other end.

"Shut up, I know that, I just meant- I-I thought he would be asleep by now since he didn't sleep well the night before, stupid. Besides, why are you letting him stay awake? You saw how he fell asleep in class today, Sap. He's going to be dead asleep for your presentation tomorrow." George felt warmth spread across his chest as he bit back a dopey grin.

Was Clay worried about him?

That's cuter than it should be.

"Oh crap, that's true. George, you should go to sleep, then. You need to recover some of your energy for tomorrow," Sapnap suggested, an almost guilty look in his expression, as if he had been the one forcing George to stay up. George waved him off quickly, sitting up straighter as of to prove he didn't feel as tired as he did.

"No, I'm fine. Really, I'm not too tired. But um..." George fidgeted with his fingers, glancing at the phone Sapnap was holding. In a slightly louder voice, he said, "Thanks for worrying, Clay."

There was a stretch of silence, the only sound being the low static coming from the call. After a moment, there was a barely audible, "Um." Sapnap snorted and covered his mouth with his hand as George felt his face grow warm.

"O-Of course, George," Clay finally stammered out, his voice wavering a bit at the end, and George could actually hear the pounding of his heartbeat in his ears as he sucked in a sharp breath.

"How's your ankle?" George blurted out, his face probably bright red at that point. There was the sound of shifting of bedsheets, then a short silence.

"Still fractured."

George snorted before letting out a soft huff of laughter, and the sound of soft chuckles came from the phone in response, making George grin impossibly wider.

"Okay, nope, I am not feeling like a third wheel in my own phone call," Sapnap cut in, making George's face flush a deeper scarlet. He was thankful the darkness of the room obscured his face somewhat and that the phone screen wasn't pointed at him to reveal his reddened face. "Clay, hop on Discord. I'll create a server so we can all be in a call."

"Does George have a discord? I need to add him," Clay said. Sapnap turned questioningly towards George who nodded in response.

"He does. I'll set everything up, you can worry about making him your Discord kitten later."

"WHAT!?" both George and Clay shouted at the same time, though Clay's was cut off midway when Sapnap hit the end call button, letting out a ferocious cackle at their shared reaction. George was certain his tomato face had to be visible at this point. "Sapnap!"

"What? It was funny, c'mon!" Sapnap let out between rounds of laughter, and then doubled over in hysterics when his phone started vibrating with several incoming messages. "Oh my god he's spamming me, I can't breathe-"

"Sap, chill, you'll wake up the whole neighborhood," Karl giggled beside him, attempting to quiet him down by muffling Sapnap's laughter with his hand again, though the attempt was futile as boy only kept on at it.

"Okay, okay. I'm good. I'm chill," Sapnap inhaled deeply and exhaled another soft laugh before finally shaking it off, moving to stand from where he had been seated on the floor flush against Karl. "Alrighty, let's play the craft, boys."

Karl had three computer setups: one that belonged to him and was in the corner of his bedroom, one in another bedroom down the hall that served as a sort of "gaming" room and that he shared



with his brother Sean, and one downstairs in a makeshift office his mother used on occasion. After Sapnap added everyone to a discord server on his phone, the three split ways to set up their discord and Minecraft tab on the three computers; Karl took the one in his mother's office (being very careful to tiptoe down the stairs and avoid making any unnecessary noise), Sapnap took the one in the gaming room down the hall, and George took the one in Karl's bedroom, making sure to turn on Karl's headset and get everything ready to go, including changing the controls to be left handed.

"Do you need help with anything, Georgie?" Karl's voice came from the headphones as he joined the call on the Discord tab in the computer, Sapnap joining a second later.

"No, I think I've got it. Thanks, Karl," George replied as he booted up Minecraft, watching a vast block terrain replace the Discord server on his screen. Once George and Sapnap had logged into their respective accounts, he was sent a friend request from Sapnap and Karl almost immediately.

"Wha- How did you-"

"Georgenotfound. Duh," Sapnap and Karl quipped at the same time, making George roll his eyes despite the soft laugh he let out. There was a sound of someone joining the call, but before he could check who, his eyes widened when he saw another friend request pop up a moment after, effectively catching his attention.

"Uhh...who is, how do you even pronounce that? Óνειρο?"

"It's pronounce óneiro."

George froze, his back going rigid at the low voice that spoke directly into his ears, sending a shiver down his spine. He swallowed roughly.

He hated how much Clay's voice affected him now.

"Óneiro?" he repeated dumbly.

"Yeah, it's a Greek word," Sapnap spoke up with a chuckle.

"What does it mean?" George asked tentatively, glancing at the discord icon at the bottom of his screen.

"It means-"

"Oh nothing, just liked how the word sounded," Clay cut in quickly, clicking sounds being heard from his side of the call. George's brows furrowed.

"But what does it-"

"Wait- oh! That's why you picked- Ohhh! You know, everything makes so much more sense now," Sapnap started suddenly, seemingly coming to some sort of realization.

"What? What makes more sense now?" George pressed on, beginning to get annoyed at their vagueness.

"Nothing. Don't worry about it," Clay said quickly, and now George was actually starting to feel pissed off.

"I'm going to look up the word if you don't tell me," George muttered, though really he was bluffing because his phone was tossed on the nightstand at the other side of the room and he just

wanted to get it out of the pair.

"George, do not look it up. Please," Clay pleaded, and now George's face screwed up in confusion.

"Why not?"

"It's just- Just don't. Not yet, at least. Okay? I'll tell you what it means later, just promise me you won't look it up."

"But why-"

"George," the way Clay said his name, his voice dropping low like a command, sent blood rushing to George's ears. "Promise me."

The call fell silent for a moment before George sighed and shook his head. "Fine. I promise I won't look it up."

"Thank you."

"Clay! Make the world already, I'm getting old over here," Sapnap whined, and that was enough to lift the heavy air that had suddenly fallen above all of them.

Karl, who had been silent for a while, suddenly spoke up with a grin in his voice. "Guys, I invited Alex to play, is that cool? Sap, add him to the server."

"I gotchu, kitten," Sapnap responded.

"What? What?? Kitten??" Clay repeated, sounding flabbergasted.

"Shut up and make the world, puppy."

"What??"

Sapnap and Clay started bickering back and forth which made George let out a giggle at their antics. He pretended not to notice how Clay's voice cut off and he fell silent when George did.

"What should we name the world, I wonder," Karl spoke up.

"I already named it," Clay said absentmindedly. And then, with a slight grin in his voice, "Alright, I sent an invite to everyone."

"Hold on, I need to accept Alex's friend request," George said when he got the notification. He let out a snort at the username just as a sound alerted him that someone else had joined the call. "So that's why people call him Quackity."

"I hate everybody," a voice grumbled lowly, making George smile wider. "I actually hate the entire human population. Especially the one that is named Georgenotfound."

"Except me though, right?" Karl giggled, and Alex's voice gave away the clear smile that lit up his face.

"Karlitos, I missed you!!"

"I missed you too, Alex!"

"Yuck. Get me out of here," Sapnap groaned as Karl burst into a fit of giggles while Alex repeated

over and over in a high pitched voice that "Oooh someone's jealous! Someone's jealous! He's jealous, your honor!"

Sapnap burst out into hysterics out of seemingly nowhere before muffling his laughter behind his hand. "Clay, why did you name the world that?"

"What did he-" Karl cut himself off with his own laughter, Alex joining in a moment after.

"Oh my god, the name is amazing! Props to Clay," Alex let out between laughs. George switched tabs, wanting to see the name of the world as well, and waited for it to pop up on his screen.

When it did, he just about screamed, "Clay!"

Clay was wheezing at the other end as George stared in shock at the name of the world Clay had created.

There it read: Georgenotfound Sex Mod.

"Why would you name it that?" George stammered out as the other four continued laughing their collective asses off. It wasn't even that funny, but they were so sleep deprived that anything could seem funny to them at that point, making them fall into rounds of laughter they could not control. Even George couldn't help the amused smile that made it's way onto his face nor the soft laughter that was inevitably pulled out of him.

"That's so stupid," George let out as he held back another laugh, clicking on the world and watching the Minecraft terrain slowly fill his screen. In front of him stood someone with a fully yellow skin save for a white blob shape going up from his legs to his chest where a pixelated smile was present. "What the fuck is that skin."

"What. Do you not like it, George?" Clay chuckled lowly as he began circling the boy in the game. "Your skin is like, just Steve with a supreme shirt and clout goggles."

"And?"

"It's basic. At least mine is original."

"It's not basic!" George let out an offended gasp, pulling a wheeze out of Clay. "And says the one with the piss colored skin. It's hideous."

"Wha- It's not piss colored! It's green, you colorblind idiot," Clay laughed again as he threw a punch at George, making George retaliate with two punches.

"Shut up, I didn't choose to be colorblind!"

"Well then get better soon."

"You-"

Clay burst out into laughter and wheezes as George started throwing every punch he could at his character, making the other turn and run away to avoid getting slaughtered by George's bare fist. George quickly chased after him, maneuvering past trees and mobs as he tried to draw closer to Clay, who only seemed to be getting farther ahead.

"C'mere, Clay!" George chanted mockingly, eliciting another laugh from Clay.

"Catch me if you can, Georgenotfound!" he laughed as he jumped into a ravine that appeared

ahead of them, making George let out a gasp. He ran up to the edge to see he had fallen into a stream at the bottom of it and after a moments delay, George fell down after him, just narrowly hitting the water.

It was a mistake, though, because Clay had been waiting for him at the bottom and took the opportunity to land several hits on George, making him drop hearts quickly.

"No, no!" George let out as he desperately attempted to get away, but his frantic movements and the water slowing him down gave Clay the opportunity to land the finishing blow, and suddenly George was staring at a red tinted screen with the words "You died!" mocking him while Clay burst into hysterical laughter.

"Oh my god, you're so bad!" Clay gasped out between wheezes, and George ignored the blush creeping up his neck as he pouted at the screen, sulking like a child.

"Shut up, I'm not! You just caught me off guard," George defended himself weakly as Clay continued laughing at his expense. The sound of someone joining the call sounded.

"Oh my god, Gogy, you really let Clay kill you not even two minutes into the game?" Sapnap chuckled teasingly.

"Shut up!"

"Wait, were you not in the call just now?" Clay asked, sounding confused as clicks sounded from his end.

"Karl, Alex and I switched to a separate VC, did you two not even notice?" Sapnap asked before laughing loudly. George was certain with the amount of ruckus they were making, they must have woken up the entire street at that point. "Oh my god, you two were so busy flirting you didn't even hear the sound of us leaving!"

"Wh- We weren't- flirting," Clay stuttered, sounding thoroughly embarrassed, and George felt similarly with his face flushing a bright red.

"Whatever, love birds. I'm going back to VC 2, so keep it PG, you hear?" Sapnap cackled maniacally before his laughter cut off and the sound of him leaving the call filled the silence that engulfed the remaining two.

"...George, are you at respawn?" Clay spoke up after tense silence, and George had to cough a bit for his voice to work properly again.

"Uh, y-yeah, I just respawned."

"Good. Stay where you are, I'm on my way."

George didn't know what he was planning, or if he was just going to kill him again, but he decided to stay planted at respawn and glance around until he spotted Clay's dumb skin running up to him. Once he caught up to George he crouched in front of him, and George wanted to actually bash his head in for finding the action of a pile of blocks adorable.

"George, listen to me. This mission is of vital importance, so we need to work together," Clay started, throwing punches just in front of George that wouldn't actually land. George decided to play along to whatever Clay was up to, moving his characters head in a makeshift nod, making Clay continue. "We need to take down Sapnap, and we are going to do it together."

"Alright," George crouched down now too, ignoring how their Minecraft character's heads were now inches apart in the game. "What's the plan."

After the two talked strategy, Clay making everything overly dramatic and George playing along with a smile threatening to break through, they split up in search of the other three players in the game. George was the first to find them, spotting them gathering beds at a village some ways down from where they had spawned, and he told Clay the coordinates so he could meet up with him there.

"Okay. Onto phase two," Clay directed once he was by George's side again, crouching behind a pair of trees so the other three wouldn't spot them. He tossed a stone sword to George, who turned to him in surprise. George could actually hear the smug smile in Clay's voice as he said, "I might have passed by a cave."

The plan wasn't all that complex or very coordinated, really, but they still executed it well enough to surround and launch an attack on Sapnap he did not expect. Though he put up a good fight, he was slain by the combined efforts of Clay and George in the end. Both of them joined VC 2 to the sound of Sapnap shouting in frustration (which George could actually hear through the walls beforehand) and Karl and Alex laughing at his defeat.

"Lets gooo!!! You're so bad! You're dog water! You're literally dog water!!" George shouted as he punched the air in victory both in real life and in game, and as Sapnap continued to cuss him out he started laughing so hard tears began collecting at the corner of his eyes.

"George! We did it!" Clay cheered as he let out an onslaught of laughter of his own, landing a few victory punches on George, none of which would be enough to kill him, of course. "We got him!"

"We did, we did! What a loser, Sapnap!" George continued taunting him as Sapnap threw every possible curse at them, only making his cheeks hurt more from smiling so hard.

"George, VC 1," Clay said suddenly, before the sound of him leaving the call sounded.

"Your boyfriend's calling," Alex snickered, making Karl let out an "oooh" and Sapnap a teasing whistle. George's laughter cut short as he choked on air, his face growing too warm for his liking.

"Shut up, he's not- Bye!" He quickly left the call, ignoring his burning face as he rejoined VC 1 where Clay was already waiting for him.

"We got him!" Clay said excitedly the moment he entered, and a giddy smile slipped back onto George's face immediately.

"Yes! We did! He stood no chance against- uh, Team Gay!"

The call fell silent, and George could actually barely hear Sapnap's voice down the hall and Karl's downstairs.

"Wait no."

"What!?" Clay wheezed out, and George scrambled to explain, his face flushing for the upteenth time that night.

"No! I didn't mean- I meant to like- mush our names together but i-it came out wrong-"

"Like a ship name!?" Clay laughed even harder, and George actually wanted to die right then and there.

"No! Like- like a team name! Where you put two names together- and I just put the 'G' from my name and the 'ay' from yours but I didn't exactly think it through-"

"You said Team Gay and with your whole chest-" Clay cut himself off with a loud wheeze that borderline began to sound like the noise a donkey would produce when its in the verge of dying, and despite the embarrassment creeping up his neck, George couldn't help but burst out into laughter at it.

"What was that noise?" he forced out between loud cackles he could no longer contain, which only made Clay laugh harder.

They continued to laugh for a while longer in their sleep deprived state before calming down a bit, though soft giggles continued to escape past George's lips, making Clay start giggling all over again.

"I had never heard you laugh like that," Clay said softly once the two had fallen silent. George felt himself shift a bit in his chair in discomfort.

"Sorry, I usually try to hold it back, I know it's loud-"

"No, no, I-" Clay cut himself off, and George hated that he could hear the other swallow roughly because it made blood rush back into George's face. In a soft voice, almost hesitantly, he finished, "I like it."

George pursed his lips as his fingers began drumming against Karl's table anxiously, Minecraft game long forgotten. All the blood in his body seemed to be rushing to his face, burning him. "You like it?"

"Yeah," Clay exhaled shakily, a smile evident in his voice. "It's contagious. It makes me laugh. I...I like the sound."

"Oh," George responded dumbly, starting to feel a bit dazed. He didn't know what to say, and thankfully he didn't have to as Clay continued.

"You should...let yourself laugh like that more often. Don't hold it back."

George worried his bottom lip between his teeth, hating the way a stupid grin made its way onto his face. "Okay."

"Clay, you're going to wake up Colton," a voice suddenly spoke up from Clay's end, sounding a bit far away. There was the squeak of a chair.

"Oh shoot, did I wake you?" Clay asked softly.

"Like an hour ago, idiot," the voice that sounded like it belonged to a young girl quipped, but there was no mal intent in her statement. "You're being really loud. Be thankful Wilbur sleeps like a log."

"I'm sorry, I'll try to be more quiet," Clay apologized, his voice coming out so soft and caring that George wanted to reach through the phone and kiss the man senseless. There was silence on the other side, and then a hesitant, "...what? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"You're talking to George, right? I heard you say his name," the girl said in a voice that sounded smug. George felt himself stiffen at the sudden acknowledgment.

"Who is that?" George asked, hearing Clay begin to stammer.

"That's- that's my sister Drist- er, Catherine- Drista, stop looking at me like that and go away, I'll be more quiet."

"Awe but why? I want to talk to George," Catherine, or Drista decided as her voice got closer, probably approaching Clay. There was a mischievous smile evident in her teasing voice.

"No, go back to bed, Dris."

"No, let me hear- Clay! I want to hear-" There was the sound of struggling on the other end of the call as if Clay and Drista were fighting for control of his headphones when suddenly a yelp resounded from Clay followed by the clash of a chair as Drista began to cackle, now directly into the mic. "Take that, you cripple! Anyways- George! Hi!"

"Hi?" George asked more than answered, taken aback with a puzzled smile on his features.

"So how are you, George?"

"Drista. Give me back my headphones-" Clay attempted again.

"No, I'm talking to George!"

"I'm alright. A bit tired, but don't tell Clay I admitted that or he'll get on my ass," George decided to entertain Drista with a response, which elicited a light chuckle from her.

"I like how you say that. Arse."

"What are you two talking about??" Clay's voice sounded in the background again, and George let out a soft laugh when he realized he had probably admitted defeat and remained sprawled on the floor.

"Nothing, god, mind your business Clay. Hey George, what do you like about my brother?"

"WHAT!?" Clay screeched in the background before Drista shushed him and scolded him for shouting, though George payed them no mind as his brain appeared to come to a halt and just stop working.

"W-What?"

"You heard me. You can answer, he can't hear you right now," Drista snickered, followed by a loud, "NO SIT YOUR ASS DOWN YOU ARE NOT HEARING THIS."

"Hey, don't say that word! And look who's screaming now!"

The two siblings continued to bicker in George's ear as a fond smile stretched onto his lips. With Clay unable to hear him, he felt himself begin to gain some courage.

"Alright. Do you want to know what I like about your brother?"

"Yes. Tell me," Drista replied immediately, way too eager for George's response.

"What's he going to tell you?" Clay asked in the background.

"About his lovely mother."

"You're a liar."

"Ignore him, George," Drista turned her attention back to the task at hand, and George could practically hear the wicked sneer on her face. "Do, go on."

George held back a laugh as he faked a thoughtful tone. "Well let's see...it's hard to say because there's not much to like."

Drista burst out laughing, falling into wheezes that actually sounded a lot like Clay's laughter, while Clay only further demanded to know what George was saying.

"He's talking shit about you," Drista snickered, then ignored her brothers reprimands for saying a curse word.

"But if you must know..." George started without much thought. Drista grew silent on the other end, and he could almost picture her leaning in as if it to hear him better. The knowledge that Clay couldn't hear what he was about to say was the only reason that he softly admitted, "You lucked out getting Clay as a brother. He's the kind of guy that will always have your back no matter what. And I guess he's funny, though don't tell him I said that. It'll inflate his ego."

Drista let out a soft snort before George continued. "And I guess...he just has a knack for making you feel safe, and welcomed, and...cared for. He's very sweet, and when he's around, you just...can't help but feel lighter. He's such an amazing friend, and-" George smiled softly as he pictured golden eyes adorned by a smile brighter than the sun itself, an entire expanse of stars freckling his face like the night sky. With a laugh that was way too fond and way too honest of George's true feelings towards the boy, he said, "The asshole makes it really fucking difficult not to like him."

"Awwwwww!" Drista cooed, ignoring when Clay started demanding to know what she was 'awe'ing about. "You know what George? I like you. You have my blessing."

"That's it," Clay's voice was a lot closer to the mic now as Drista let out a surprise squeak, the headphones apparently being torn off of her and placed back onto Clay's head. "Sorry about that, George. What were you two even talking about?"

"It's a secret, chismoso," Drista answered for him, not that George would've known what to say if he had been forced to respond.

"What did you call me?" Clay asked in bewilderment.

"Chismoso."

"Isn't that a spanish- Were you playing ToonTown with Alex again?"

"Mmm, maybe, maybe not."

As Clay and Drista continued squabbling back and forth, George resting his head on his chin, he forgot to hide the long yawn that ripped out of him, rendering Clay silent.

"George, you are tired," Clay finally said, concern dripping in his tone. "You need to go to sleep."

"M'not, you go to sleep," George responded stubbornly, though he could feel his eyes were growing heavier than led as his words slurred together, his consciousness beginning to slip out from under him.

"You should go to sleep now, George. I'm not going to sleep until you do."



George remained quiet for a moment before deciding to finally listen to his body for once. "Okay. Only if you go to bed now, too."

"Yes. I will."

"Pinky promise?"

Clay let out a soft laugh that sounded suspiciously fond. "We are in a call, you idiot, we can't pinky promise."

"Boooo, you're no fun," George grumbled making Clay let out another laugh, a drowsy smile lifting the corners of George's lips.

"Jesus, you act so gross with him, Clay. Just kiss him goodnight and go," Drista spoke up in the background, slightly startling George, who had nearly forgotten she was still there. Clay's stammers filled his ears.

"Why would you- even say that!?"

"What? It wouldn't be the first ti-"

"Go to bed!" Clay cut her off quickly, sounding exceedingly flustered, and a yelp was pulled out of her before she complained not to push her. Eventually she gave in and said a quick goodnight to the two before she left Clay's room, the soft squeak of a door signaling her exit.

"I like your sister. She's cool," George said tiredly, his head dropping to rest on his crossed arms. He could hear the soft smile in Clay's voice.

"I'm glad you liked her, despite how annoying she can be."

"Eh, she's not as annoying as you. She is funnier, though."

An offended gasp sounded in George's ears, making him release a string of giggles. "How could you say that, George!"

"What? Did I say something wrong?" George teased, before laughter bubbled out of him at Clay letting out another offended sound.

"You wound me. You rip my heart into pieces," Clay sighed dramatically. George's cheeks were actually beginning to hurt as he pressed them against his arms, obscuring his stupidly large grin from view.

"You're such an idiot," he giggled softly as he closed the Minecraft tab to instead stare at the discord server, his gaze drifting to the small green icon with a smiling white blob above his own.

"Hey, go to sleep already, dummy," Clay's voice spoke softly into his ears, and if George closed his eyes, he could almost imagine him right beside him, whispering those same words in person.

"Ugh, I know, I knowww, you're so infuriating," he responded dramatically and with no real heat.

"Oh, you love me."

George froze, his mouth running dry at Clay's words that despite the teasing edge they held had rendered him speechless. This wasn't the first time Clay had made this same joke, in fact it was the third time since he had first met him, but this time, his response to it was different. As he moved his mouse to hover over the end call button, his sleep deprived mind made him blurt out something

incredibly stupid.

"Mmm, maybe I do. Good night, Clay."

His finger clicked the mouse and deafening silence filled his ears.

It was only a second later that he realized what he had practically admitted as he shot up and stumbled away from Karl's computer to the other side of the room, threw himself onto his bed, dropped his head onto his pillow and screamed.



After the sound indicating that George had left the VC sounded, a all encompassing silence filled Clay's ears as he remained seated in his chair, staring blankly at the Discord tab still open on his screen. He slowly moved to his keyboard, typing a message in the chat that George and him had decided to go off to bed, but he was working on autopilot, his mind not exactly caught up with his actions.

As he closed the Minecraft and discord tab and shut down his computer, he slowly slid his headphones off of his head, staring back at the reflection now visible on the black screen.

He shot up from his chair, ignoring his stumble as he maneuvered as best he could with a cast one one foot to his bed before flopping down on it, burying his face into his pillow as his feet began kicking madly like a love struck school girl.

He was almost certain the burning of his face would melt a hole through his pillow.

## Chapter End Notes

Clay never told George what όνειρο meant LOL

but anyways HI EVERYONE!! HRU I MISSED U GUYS ;; Finally back with another update, I'm sorry it's been so long!

Just a couple of announcements before I leave you to your day! I know I just got back but this story is taking another hiatus (I know I'm so sorry) because I decided I was going to work on the next chapters all the way to the very last one and I am not sure how long that will take me, but rest assured when I have returned, I will have all the chapters finished and will be posting a new one daily until we get to the very end so hopefully it will have been worth it!

Another thing, since a lot of people wanted a Spotify playlist for this fic I have decided to make one :D it is still in the works because I want to make it as perfect as I possibly can but I also wanted to include songs that may remind YOU of Love, Dream so please give me suggestions in the comments! I will give them a listen and might just include them! :]

Also I changed my username! The end of an era, goodbye user @kirbakii...do u guys like the username @kirbsaki? lmk ur thoughts :0

I believe that's about it from me, sorry this got long and thank you all for being so patient with me. I'm so sorry updates are slow but I promise we are nearing the end :]

we are almost there gamers! Stay with me for a little longer!!

And as always remember to drink lots of water, eat your meals and remember to take care of yourselves, I love you guys so much! Have a great day/night!

- Kirbs -

P.S. hey follow me on Twitter and Insta @kirbsaki I would love to interact with you guys on there! I also post dnf art wink wonk;)

## Chapter 26

### Chapter Summary

George dreams, Clay has a talk with someone that was long overdue, and Minx is captain of the dnf ship

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Later that night, when the exhaustion that had been weighing over him all day finally managed to pull him under, George dreamed.

He was lying in the middle of a grassy field, dew drops clinging onto the swaying grass around him, soaking into his back despite the warmth the sun radiated from where it perched itself in the expanse of blue sky above him.

He remained there for a moment longer, breathing in deeply a scent he could not identify, or maybe there was no smell to begin with. His hair was being ruffled lightly by the passing wind as his eyes fluttered shut, a serene calm washing over him.

There was a sudden sinking in his stomach as his body screamed at him that someone was laying beside him, but he did not turn to look. Somebody shifted closer to him, their hand lightly grazing his cheek and jawline, but he still did not open his eyes.

As soft lips pressed onto his own, George merely exhaled deeply as he felt the fluttering of his heart invade his every senses, making him feel warm, calm, safe.

The kiss broke too soon, and when George finally opened his eyes, he found himself gazing into pools of liquid honey.

"Clay," he said, his voice just above a whisper. There was the sound of birds chirping, and then the boy above him smiled. The sun appeared to create a halo around his head, his dirty blond hair turning into wisps of gold, his cheekbone and jawline highlighted in a way that made him look like a deity sent directly from the heavens. George watched as his lips parted, and then in a voice that was neither his nor anybody's George could identify, he said:

"Still convinced I'm Clay, huh?"

George awoke the next morning, the sunlight filtering into the room and tickling him awake, casting its brightness over the tangled bodies of Sapnap and Karl in the bed beside him. As George fidgeted with his own covers, bringing his knees up to his chest to press his face into, he couldn't help but feel completely and utterly confused.

Once Clay was finally able to maneuver past the crowds of people asking him about his leg when he arrived to school in crutches the next morning, he found Sapnap, Karl, Quackity and George idling beside his locker. He was surprised to see Karl was half clinging to Sapnap, his arm looped through the other and bringing him in flushly to his side, as Sapnap and Quackity appeared to be bickering about something. Clay tentatively approached the group, George's eyes immediately darting to his.

When their eyes met, Clay felt as though someone had just sucker punched him in the stomach and knocked all the air out of his lungs.

George was wearing a loose, military green long-sleeve with a white shirt underneath, making Clay bite back a grin when he realized George probably saw it as yellow. He wore loose ripped jeans and his usual white tennis shoes. What caught his eye, however, was the black beanie he wore, his dark brown locks pressed down and messily peeking out from under it, the bangs nearly reaching his eyes.

"Hi," Clay said dumbly, still openly staring at the beanie on George's head. He watched as George moved his hand up to it, swiping at his hair a little bit only for it to flop back into place.

"Hey," George answered softly, and Clay couldn't help the smile that lit up his face.

"The beanie...?" Clay had to ask, but before George could give an answer, the rest of the group's attention had shifted to Clay.

"That's Quackity's beanie," Sapnap explained with a grumble, elicitation an accusatory reprimand from Alex about the nickname. Clay tried to ignore the twinge of jealousy that curled in his gut as his eyes slid from Alex to his beanie on George's head.

"This nimrod accidentally put on two beanies this morning and didn't notice," Karl explained with a giggle, letting go of his hold on Sapnap to nudge his shoulder against Alex's, who turned to glare at the taller boy.

"Yeah, but I literally asked you if I could wear the extra beanie first and you said no. And then George asks you a second later and you stuff it on his head!" Sapnap huffed as he crossed his arms with a pout. George had a self satisfied grin as Alex moved to rest his weight on him, and Clay thanked the Lord he was in need of crutches at the moment and couldn't move around too easily because it was the one thing preventing him from walking up to the two and ripping Alex's arm off of George's shoulder himself.

"That's because I like George more than you," Alex quipped.

"The first words you said when you joined VC last night were about how you hated him," Sapnap countered.

Alex shrugged, putting on a wicked grin. "Times change."

"This is unfair! The beanie doesn't even match his outfit," Sapnap continued complaining, Karl saying something like "Sap, you know nothing about matching outfits" and Sapnap telling him to shut up, but Clay wasn't exactly listening as his focus remained trained on Alex's arm still perched on George's shoulder.

He didn't even realize he was glaring until Alex stiffened under his penetrating gaze and practically jumped off of George. The action made Clay feel a bit guilty, though another part of him was glad he had finally gotten off of him.

"I should probably get to class now," Alex said quickly, his eyes flicking between Sapnap and Karl. "Congrats again. And good luck on your speech presentation, and George," Alex turned to point at George menacingly, his eyes narrowing into slits. "Don't lose the beanie."

"I won't, I won't," George laughed lightly as Alex scampered off, the group echoing their respective goodbyes.

"Wait, what did he mean by congrats?" Clay asked as he looked at the pair clinging onto each other curiously. Now that he thought about it, the two seemed a lot more...touchy than usual. Sapnap turned to beam at him, Karl covering his grin with his hand as his face went pink.

"So last night we had a talk and..." Sapnap trailed off, wrapping his arms around Karl's waist delightfully. "We're dating now!"

"No shit!" Clay gasped, a surprised smile making itself present on his face. "Dude, that's so awesome, congrats you two! About time."

"That's what I said, too," George snickered, side eyeing the lovesick couple. "It really took them long enough. How dense can you get."

"Hey! Rude," Sapnap pouted, swatting at George's head who moved away from the attack with a smile. "I'll forgive you for saying that if you give me the beanie."

"Nope, mine now," George gripped the beanie on his head and stuck his tongue out at him, Clay feeling his heart squeeze at the sight.

"C'mon, Sap, he's not giving it up. Let's get to class," Karl chuckled lightly before dragging Sapnap away by the hand to their homeroom class despite his string of complaints. Clay watched them go with a smile, incredibly happy and proud of his best friend for finally working up the nerve to ask out his crush. Once the two were out of ear shot, George turned back to look up at Clay with a shy smile.

George's words from the night before suddenly rang in his ears.

"Mmm, maybe I do."

"Are you feeling alright? Your face is kind of flushed," George gestured towards his own face as if to emphasize his question, making Clay stiffen and his heart speed up.

Why did he have to remember that right then?

"I-I'm fine," he choked out quickly, clearing his throat and looking away from George's pretty brown eyes. "I should be asking you that. Did you sleep well?"

"Ah," George stammered out, and for some reason it was George's turn to flush red. "Y-Yeah. You could say that..."

"That's...good," Clay responded, mentally face palming at how awkward he was being.

Seriously, what was up with him?

"Oh, but your foot...Has it been bothering you?" George perked up, lightly tapping his foot against Clay's cast, an action that Clay couldn't help but find absolutely adorable.

"I've pretty much gotten used to it, but..." Clay huffed a bit, glancing at his cast. "It does get really

itchy. It's kind of annoying since I can't scratch it."

"That sucks. I wish I could help you but I don't exactly want to scratch your foot, either," George wrinkled his nose in disgust, making Clay huff out a laugh. An idea suddenly came to him and, despite his heart hammering against his ribcage and threatening to jump out, he put on a charming smile.

"You might be able to help another way," Clay grinned cheekily. George gave him a puzzled look, prompting Clay to continue, his voice dipping low. "You could...kiss it better."

George's mouth flopped open and closed a few times before he cringed. "Ew, I'm not kissing your foot."

Clay barked out a laugh before shaking his head, thankful George couldn't feel his stuttering heartbeat. "No, you idiot. I didn't mean kiss my foot."

A tense silence stretched between the two, and Clay drank up the sight of George's face turning pink, his lips falling slack and his eyes going wide as saucers. Finally, he practically breathed out, "Oh."

Clay let out another wheeze, though it was more of a nervous reaction than anything as he quickly began to backtrack. "I was kidding, George, relax. It was just a-"

He didn't get to finish as suddenly George was grabbing the neckline of Clay's shirt, pulling him down towards him and crashing their lips together.

Clay's eyes widened comically, and he didn't even get a chance to process the kiss as George pulled back just as quickly as it had happened, his face a furious red as he looked up at Clay with an almost determined look in his eyes.

"There," George muttered before letting go of Clay's shirt and turning on his heel, practically sprinting away from him and towards the direction of their class. Clay watched him go in absolute shock, his mouth slack and his eyes still blown wide in astonishment.

The hall had been empty by then, everyone having already gone to their respective homeroom classes before the bell could ring, but even if it had been bustling with students, Clay would have been unable to pay them any mind. He stood unmoving beside his locker, his brain short circuiting as one of his hands crept up to graze over where George's lips had just been.

As the tardy bell sounded all around him, his cheeks began to hurt as the biggest smile he had ever worn formed onto his features.



After an entire class period of throwing not so subtle glances at George, who always met his eye with a not so subtle glance of his own (even once sticking his tongue out at him and making Clay choke back a laugh), Clay found he did not pay attention to a single thing the teacher had said that entire lecture. The bell rang and everyone moved to exit the classroom, and as Clay hastily got his things together, he could not seem to take his eyes off of the brunette, almost as if the boy had put him under a trance with that kiss.

It's as George was trailing behind Karl and Sapnap to exit the classroom that Clay snapped out of it and blurted out, "George!"

George froze, his head turning back to meet his eye in surprise as Clay flashed him a crooked smile. "Good luck on your speech presentation."

George's smile was bright and beautiful as he turned and walked out of the classroom.



Another class period later, Clay is making his way down the bustling hallway as best as he can with the aid of crutches in search of George (who he may or may not want to spend the lunch period with) when the last person he wanted to see moved into his line of sight.

"Hey, Clay," Sam said as she stepped in front of him, effectively blocking his path to continue forward and ruining his attempt to ignore her. He stared at his ex, hoping his face didn't give away the annoyance that began to bubble underneath the surface.

"Sam. Hey."

"I just...your ankle got worse?" Sam gestured quickly to Clay's cast before her hand fell back down to her side, fidgeting a bit with the grey sweatpants she was currently wearing.

"Yeah, pretty much. I'm fine, though, just need to be in this cast for a bit," Clay shrugged one shoulder, adjusting the crutches under his arms to rest his weight a bit atop them. Sam nodded slightly.

"Alright, that's good." Sam sucked in a sharp breath before beginning to back away a bit, looking as uncomfortable as Clay felt. "So I should...I'll go."

Clay doesn't know what demon decided to possess him in that moment because he suddenly found himself blurting out, "Wait."

Sam stopped mid-turn to leave, glancing back at him a bit hesitantly.

"Can we talk?"



The two found themselves seated at one of the benches placed in the front of the school. The area was relatively empty, and the wind picked up the moment they sat down as if it sensed things were about to take a turn for the worst. Sam remained quiet beside him as Clay fidgeted with his phone, passing it from one hand to the other as an uncomfortable silence stretched on. He finally sighed and set it down on the bench before speaking up first.

"I just want to understand." Sam gave him a questioning look. "Why you cheated," he clarified awkwardly. Sam's mouth pressed into a thin line before she looked away.



"I'm sorry, Clay."

"No, don't," Clay gripped his knees, his knuckles turning white. "Don't do that. Don't start apologizing. I just...want an explanation."

Sam remained silent for a long moment and Clay was about to speak up when she said, "I was horrible to you, Clay."

Clay's eyes widened comically, completely taken aback by her blunt words. He watched silently as Sam slouched a bit, bringing her knees up to her chest to rest her head on.

"I treated you terribly, and not at all like how I should have as your girlfriend, I know that. You weren't happy with me. And honestly, I wasn't happy with you either." Sam's voice had begun to waver as she wrapped her arms around her legs, curling herself up into a little ball. "I was going through a lot of crap that I don't want to get into- it was just an internal battle that for some reason I couldn't tell you about even though you were my boyfriend. I couldn't tell anyone, for that matter. So I tried dealing with my shitty mental health and my constant insecurities on my own and ended up taking everything out on you. And for that, I'm so, so sorry, Clay. I soured our relationship from the start and we only lasted as long as we did because the toxicity became normal for us even though it never should have been."

Clay remained silent as he digested her words, still in shock at what he was hearing. But Sam wasn't done. "I met him when I was at my lowest. I know that doesn't excuse anything, but at the time, I just needed something new. Someone that didn't know what a shit person I was. A clean slate, if you will. So I started messing around with him behind your back to try to find some normalcy with him that I didn't have with you. I thought, maybe he would make me feel like I was okay. Like nothing was wrong with me. I didn't end up feeling that way, of course, but by then I had already become too dependent on him, too."

Clay hadn't even noticed the tears that had begun slipping down Sam's face until the quiver in her voice was too noticeable to ignore. "I'm so sorry, Clay, truly. I should've broken things off with you before I did any of that. Honestly, things between us should have ended so long ago. Our relationship wasn't normal or right in any way- we were only continuing to hurt each other by being together. And then I chose the worst possible moment, after the accident-"

"Yeah, your timing was pretty shitty," Clay cut her off with a sigh, carding his hand through his hair as he looked away from Sam's tear stricken face. "But what's done is done. We can't change what happened in the past, just continue moving forward."

"I know. But I just...want you to know how sorry I am and..." Sam trailed off, and Clay glanced at her to see how she clasped her shaking hands together. There was a forlorn smile on her face. "I'm getting better. Slowly, but I'm getting there. I'm seeing a therapist currently, and I broke things off with the guy after you ran into us last week. I knew it wasn't right to stay with him, it was practically just a repeat of our relationship and it's a cycle I needed to end, so..." Sam turned to meet Clay's gaze, another tear slipping down her face. "I'll get better. And I will become the type of person I was unable to be for you."

Clay frowned slightly. "Sam, we can't- I'm not-"

"No, no, I'm not saying I want to get back together with you. That ship's sailed, I know that," Sam corrected quickly, uncurling from her position to swing her legs freely. "I just meant, I'll become better for my next person. And I don't know who they will be, or when I'll be ready for that, but...I hope by the time that comes...I'll be better."

Clay nodded in understanding, turning away from her saddened gaze once more. "I see."

There was a stretch of silence, and then almost hesitantly, Sam asked, "How's your sister?"

Clay let out a soft laugh as he recalled his most recent conversations with his little sister. "Better than ever. She gave me a lecture the other day, actually. About how I should stop blaming myself for the accident already."

Sam visibly stiffened at his words which made Clay turn to her questioningly. "What is it, Sam?"

"How can you blame yourself when it wasn't even your fault?" Her voice was barely above a whisper but it seemed to strike Clay like a knife to the chest. "I was the one on the phone arguing with you, distracting you from the road- Clay, the only thing you did wrong was let me yell at you while you were driving."

"Sam, hold on, don't tell me you blame yourself for what happened," Clay's eyebrows screwed together in confusion, and at Sam's silence they only furrowed more so. "Sam."

"I never properly apologized about that either, huh," Sam spoke again, her voice still dripping with guilt. Without much thought, Clay moved a hand to the back of her head and brought her close to his chest, resting his chin atop her black dyed hair.

"Don't blame yourself, Sam. Dris- Catherine never blamed you, okay? And even if she did, she's forgiven you by now," Clay murmured softly as Sam relaxed into his chest. "I didn't realize the accident affected you this way, too. I'm sorry."

"No, I'm sorry. For turning my back on you when things got hard." Sam's arms slowly wrapped around Clay's frame. "Thank you for talking to me. I think I needed this."

"I did, too," Clay admitted, shifting a bit to properly return the hug, gently squeezing her in his arms. "I wish you the best, truly. No matter what happened in the past, I'm willing to move past it. And if this makes your load a little lighter, just know that I've forgiven you."

Clay could feel the tears soaking into his t-shirt as she furrowed her face into his chest. "Even now, you're so good to me. I never deserved your kindness, Clay. I hope you find someone that will be good to you just as you are to the people around you, even those that don't deserve it. For that alone you deserve everything."

Clay subconsciously squeezed her tighter, not saying anything at all. His phone started vibrating on the bench just beside him, and it kept on buzzing until it abruptly fell silent before he could even notice.



"What the fuck."

George glanced up to the row above him where Tommy and Wilbur were seated. He was currently eating lunch with his friends at the bleachers surrounding the football stadium like they had the week before. Karl and Quackity had joined them, since Karl insisted on watching his boyfriend's football practice like the absolute simp he is, but they had left for the moment to head back inside in search for some food at the cafeteria.

The sun was beating down on all of their heads and making the bleachers they sat on just a fraction away from becoming scorching to the touch. Despite the sun, though, a gust of wind had just picked up a moment ago, occasionally causing shivers to travel down George's back.

The football team was out on the field practicing drills, and though George would occasionally pinpoint Sarnap just to burst out laughing the times he would get tackled, he would be lying if he said he didn't wish Clay was also out there. But of course he wasn't, not with his fractured ankle and inability to play until he recovers.

If he was being honest, a part of him was almost selfishly disappointed. He would have liked to watch Clay running about on the field again, playing the sport he appears to love so much (even if George can't understand any of it).

Tubbo had stood up from his spot beside Tommy to walk over to a dirty blond boy wearing dark sunglasses waiting for him at the end of the row. Tommy's fists were shaking in anger as he suddenly shot up, glaring at the boy George vaguely recalled went by Ranboo. Niki, who was seated beside him, also curiously watched the scene unfolding before them.

"You're leaving with him again?" Tommy continued loudly, pointing accusingly at Ranboo as if he had just personally insulted him.

"Tommy-"

"Don't Tommy me, Tubbo. Seriously, what is so special about this guy? Literally all the time it's Ranboo this, Ranboo that. You are always hanging out with him now! I didn't even see you during lunch or after school yesterday until you got home super late because you were out with him, and even in class after our presentation you were whispering amongst each other! And now here he is again because you just can't seem to get enough of him!" Tommy shouted, throwing his hands up in the air dramatically before letting them drop, his hands falling limp at his sides in defeat. George couldn't see Tommy's expression from where he was sitting, but his voice had a twinge of hurt. "I haven't seen much of you lately, man. It feels like you're avoiding me. Did I do something?"

"Tommy, no, of course you didn't do anything," Tubbo reassured quickly, moving a bit to stand in front of Tommy. "Shit man, I didn't mean to make you feel that way. I guess I just...got excited I made a new friend."

Tommy was silent for a moment before he shook his head, letting out a quick breath. "Shit, no, Tubbo. I'm sorry. You're allowed to hang out with other people, I'm sorry I'm being so-"

"Clingy?" Wilbur supplied for him. Tommy turned for a second to shoot him a sharp look.

"No, Wilbur. Shut up, I'm not clingy," Tommy pouted, turning back to face Tubbo. "I guess I just felt-"

"Left out?" Tubbo finished for him, flashing him a crooked smile. Tommy huffed a bit, crossing his arms.

"Seriously, you two have to learn not to try and finish people's sentences, it's freakish. Fuckin' weirdos."

Despite the harsh words, Tommy's quip came out in a lighthearted tone which thankfully seemed to clear the air a bit, lifting some of the tension that had fallen over the group as everyone let out a bit of soft laughter at his remark. George watched curiously as Ranboo suddenly surged forward down the row to stand just beside Tubbo.

"I'm sure Bo never meant to make you feel left out. No, I'm positive he never meant that," Ranboo started. Everyone's gaze turned towards the taller blond, making the boy cough a bit at all the attention trained on him before forcing himself to continue. "I know we didn't get off on the right foot, and you don't seem to like me very much but I, um...." He seemed to steel himself before turning to face Tommy head on. "I would like us to be friends, too."

"Wot."

"We're going to Five Guys to eat lunch and we would like you to join us," Ranboo finished, and though his posture seemed determined his hands were fiddling together nervously. Tommy gaped at him, clearly taken aback, and as the silence stretched on Ranboo began to squirm under his gaze. "O-Only if you want to, obviously. It's up to you. But it would be cool if you came."

"You want me to go with you guys?" Tommy repeated dumbly, his gaze flicking from Tubbo to Ranboo and then back again. Tubbo rolled his eyes at him, a smile stretching on his face.

"Of course, idiot. We actually wanted to invite you to come with us yesterday but then you started yelling about how you wanted to fight Boo," Tubbo snickered a bit as Tommy grumbled a string of unintelligible excuses.

"You should go with them, Tommy," Niki spoke up, looking up at the boy with an encouraging smile.

"Yeah, just don't actually fight the guy, man," Wilbur added, to which Tommy responded by shoving his head to the side.

"So you coming or what?" Tubbo grinned hopefully, Ranboo leaning down a bit beside him to gaze at Tommy with a similar expectancy. Tommy stared at the two for a beat longer before exhaling dramatically, shoving both of their faces away to get them walking.

"Alright, alright, only cause you want me to so badly. Let's go to Five Girls or whatever."

"It's Five Guys," Ranboo corrected.

"Fucking hate that place already. Seriously, Ranboo, are you actively trying to make an enemy out of me," Tommy grumbled causing Tubbo to burst out laughing, the trio walking down the bleachers and down to the field to head to the parking lot, chatting loudly amongst themselves. George, who had remained silent the whole while watched them go, and just before they were out of view, he spotted Tommy's grin lighting up his features as he let out a loud spout of laughter that carried all the way back to where they were seated.

"I kept telling Tommy to just talk to Ranboo. He obviously wanted to befriend him, but that idiot kept trying to argue with him instead. Made the poor guy think he hated him," Wilbur shook his head as he let out a fond laugh. "It's almost endearing how bad he is at making friends like a normal person."

"Oh, don't be so hard on him. He's trying his best," Niki giggled with a same fondness, and George couldn't help but smile at Tommy's familiar antics.

"Niki, there you fuckin' are!" a voice suddenly yelled, cutting through the comfortable silence that had settled amongst the remaining three. George watched as Minx ran up the rows of bleachers to where they were seated, her gaze trained on Niki alone. "I was looking for you, dummy."

"Why didn't you just call me?" Niki smiled as Minx sat down between her and George. Minx stared at her blankly.

"I'll be honest I don't know why I didn't think of that."

George let out a snort that made Minx turn her attention to him.

"Gogy!" she beamed.

"Minx," George responded with a fond rolling of eyes.

"Nice beanie. You kind of look like Quackity like that."

George smiled. "It's actually his."

"Of course it is."

"I'm here too, you know," Wilbur spoke up behind them, waving as if to call attention to himself. Minx looked around, pretending not to see him.

"Y'all hear sum."

"Seriously, Minx, what are you, five?" Wilbur laughed lightly as Minx stuck her tongue out at him.

"Oh, George, I nearly forgot!" Minx spoke up suddenly, and then moved to wrap her arms around George, squeezing him tightly. "I promised you a hug yesterday!"

"Oh, right," George chuckled, awkwardly returning the hug before she was letting him go. Niki was staring at the two with wide eyes before a sly smile made its way onto her lips.

"Nice one, Minx," she teased, nudging Minx a bit with her shoulder.

"Ew, no! Niki!" Minx said quickly, faking a gag before turning sheepishly to grin at George. "Er, no offense."

"None taken."

"But anyways, no. Me and him? Nothing is going on here. We are just friends," Minx assured, wrapping an arm around George's shoulder and poking his cheek. "Plus, this man's already taken."

"What!?" George yelped, his face flushing at an alarming rate. He avoided looking at the smug smile on Minx's face.

"Oh? Am I wrong? My bad, didn't know friends just casually suck face-"

"MINXHSJFKCLX," George slapped a hand over Minx's mouth but it was already too late, because Niki was gaping at him while Wilbur was smiling at him with an oddly knowing look.

"George, you kissed someone?" Niki gasped. George wanted to dig a hole in the football field and bury himself there.

"I, um...yeah?" George stammered out, looking anywhere but at his friends. He was going to tell them eventually, but he didn't expect to have to so soon. "It's a long story..."

"Laying down in a hospital bed to kiss someone is not that long of a story," Wilbur grinned mischievously, and now it was George's turn to gape at him.

"Wha- How did you-"

Wilbur gave him a look. "Who's house do you think I've been staying at."

It took George an embarrassingly long time to realize what he was saying, but once it dawned on him his face probably would have rivaled the color of a tomato. "Oh my god, he told you!?"

"He?" Niki repeated in shock before a million watt smile lit up her face as she reached over Minx to hug George. "Oh my god, George!"

"Guess the cat's out of the bag," George said lamely, a sheepish grin on his face as she let him go to beam at him.

"Don't you mean the cat's out of the closet?"

"Shut up, Minx."

"So are you bi?" Niki asked curiously. George furrowed just brows.

"Honestly, I hadn't really thought of it until now. I suppose I am? I just assumed I only liked girls my whole life but then I met..." George blushed furiously, covering his face with his hands. "Oh my god, this is so embarrassing."

"No, it's cute!" Niki giggled, and then she reached over to grab hold of George's hands, bringing them down from his face so he could look at her. "Awe, it's alright! Being bisexual is so freaking cool. I should know since I'm bi, and I'm pretty awesome."

"You are!?" Minx shouted suddenly before she lost her balance and fell backwards, her back hitting the row behind her just beside Wilbur's legs. "Ouch."

"I am! I didn't tell you?" Niki said, and Minx stared at her with accusatory eyes, though the look wasn't very menacing due to the flush overtaking her cheeks.

"No! I had no idea!"

"I thought you had a good gaydar, Minx," George teased, and then burst out laughing when Minx attempted to lunge herself at him, only to lose her balance and fall back on her ass again.

"Shut the fuck up, asshole!" Minx growled as George continued laughing hysterically, Niki and Wilbur watching the two in amusement. Finally they all calmed down as Minx shook George's shoulder lightly.

"What are you still doing here? Go spend lunch with your boyfriend! Isn't he in crutches right now?"

"He's not my..." George started to refute, but then realized what else Minx had said. He shot up from his seat. "Shit, that's true! Most of his friends are in football practice and Karl and Quackity were with us earlier. Who is he spending lunch with??"

"You if you hurry! Now go, lover boy! Scram!" Minx hurried him, shoving him to start moving down the row of bleachers. "And remember what I told you! Don't throw everything away 6 months early!"

George flashed her a thankful smile as he began to make his way down when a thought came to him, making him quickly turn around and hurry back to Minx. "Oh, I almost forgot to tell you." He leaned in to her ear and whispered something, and then turned and bolted when she let out a sharp gasp.

"WHAT?! YOU KISSED HIM AGAIN?!?!?!" she screamed, followed by similar reactions from Wilbur and Niki, but by then he was already at the bottom of the bleachers and running out of the football field.



George slowed to a speed walk once he was out of the stadium, glancing around just in case Clay happened to have exited the building and was somewhere nearby.

He roamed around for a bit outside before realizing it would be futile trying to find him like that, but he didn't have Clay's phone number so he couldn't just shoot him a text asking where he was.

He scrunched his eyebrows together and took out his phone anyway, deciding to quickly message Minx.

George [12:29]

do u know Clay's # answer quick

Minx [12:29]

HE HASNT EVEN ASKED FOR UR #????

Minx [12:29]

you two are on another level of hopeless

George [12:29]

shut up and give me it

Minx [12:30]

alright alright find geez so demanding

Minx [12:31]

+1-407-\*\*\*-\*\*\*

Minx [12:31]

there ya go lover boy

George quickly added the number to his contacts under the name "Clay". His finger hovered over the message button as he hesitated. He figured Clay might not see the message if he tried texting him so it would just be easier to try calling him first. He steeled his nerves and clicked the call button instead.

He brought the phone up to his ear, glancing at his surroundings. He had been wandering for a while outside the building and found himself near the front of the school. As his phone continued to ring in his ear, he walked up the side of the school and around to the front, glancing at the trees and benches set up to make the entrance look more appealing. He was going to walk through the double doors leading inside when a couple seated at one of the benches made him do a double take.

His eyes widened as his hand fell limp to his side, accidentally pressing the end call button in the process. He stared at the boy and girl hugging, trying to make sense of what he was seeing.

From where he stood he couldn't make out the face of the girl due to her back facing him, and the guy's face was mostly obscured as he buried his face into her shoulder, her inky black hair brushing against his dirty blond one.

But George knew that dirty blond hair. He had ran his fingers through those soft curls before.

George's gaze fell to the white cast enveloping one of the boy's feet. And just beside him, leaning against the bench were two forgotten crutches.

As he watched the two pull away from each other, George stood frozen, unable to even attempt to flee the scene.

He didn't understand what was going on. What was happening? Who was that girl? Was she a friend?

Golden eyes slid to his and widened. George startled at being spotted, and he considered making his way over to them until the girl noticed the boy's staring and turned to follow his gaze.

The face he saw was a familiar one. It was the girl that he and Clay had ran into when they had been exiting the building the night of the football game where Clay sprained his ankle.

It was Clay's ex-girlfriend.

"George?" Clay said, his brows furrowing in confusion. It was no wonder he had that reaction since George felt seconds away from throwing up, his face probably as pale as snow. Sam remained silent beside him, glancing between them as they continued to stare at each other in confusion for two different reasons. George had to force a smile onto his face, though it may have come out as more of a grimace.

"I..." George started, his throat running dry at the worst possible moment. He cleared his throat and



forced out, "I, um...sorry to interrupt."

"George, wait-" Clay called out, but by then George had turned on his heel and pushed open the double doors, walking through them without once turning back. His heart was hammering inside his chest as he screwed his eyes shut, wondering what in the ever living fuck he had just witnessed.

## Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone!! Long time no see :D

I know I'm meant to still be on hiatus but it's been going on for longer than I expected and so I decided to at least post the next chapter since I already had it written a long time ago. I'll still be back on hiatus so sorry if things are VERY slow for a while, school started up so that's kept me very busy on top of everything :')

Hoping everyone is well! I missed all of you! Remember to drink lots of water, eat your meals, and take care of yourselves, I love you guys so much! Have a great day/night!

- Kirbs -

P.S. hey follow me on Twitter and Insta @kirbsaki I would love to interact with you guys on there<3

## Chapter 27

### Chapter Summary

Hello everybody, my name is Kirbs and welcome back to Love, Dream.

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Is he a friend of yours?" Clay's ex-girlfriend asked as George pushed through the double doors and was out of sight. Clay watched him go, mentally cursing his cast because he knew he wouldn't be able to catch up to him even if he tried.

"He's...well, yeah. But it's a little more complicated than that," Clay responded distantly, still staring at the spot where George had just been. His brows furrowed in thought.

George had seen him hugging his ex, and he knows what that must've looked like. He really didn't want any misunderstandings to arise from that.

"I should go," Clay said, grabbing his phone that was still set on the bench beside him. He briefly glanced at the screen to look at the time and noticed a missed call from an unknown number. He ignored it and pocketed his phone, grabbing his crutches and getting up. "See you."

"Bye, Clay," she nodded politely in turn, and with that Clay turned and made his way inside, through the double doors where George had just gone through.



George wasn't stupid. He knew better than to assume things about what he had just witnessed, despite not entirely understanding it.

He knew there was probably a logical explanation for Clay hugging his ex, and if he asked Clay about it, George knew he would gladly give it to him.

He didn't walk away from them because he thought they were getting back together, or Clay suddenly didn't like him. He was sure Clay reciprocated his feelings, that much should have been clear by now.

George walked away because seeing Clay hugging his ex-girlfriend was a wakeup call. It was like the world was showing him what Clay could have if George weren't in the picture. Not his ex-girlfriend exactly, but someone else that lived in the United States and wouldn't be leaving him in 6 months. Someone else Clay could fall in love with and spend time with that wouldn't leave him in the end.

George was being selfish. He wanted Clay so badly that he was going to end up breaking both of their hearts in the end.

George needed to let him go.



George avoided Clay for the rest of the day.

And it was easy for him to do, considering Clay was still struggling to make his way around the school in crutches. Whenever Clay would see George and call his name, the other would merely bolt in the opposite direction, and Clay wouldn't be able to do much but watch him go in annoyance.

He did run into Alyssa at the end of the day, however, someone who thankfully wasn't avoiding his presence like the plague.

When he told her about his talk with his ex-girlfriend and how everything went, she gave him an incredibly soft smile while saying, "I'm proud of you, Clay."

Clay gave her a wobbly one in return, urging himself not to start crying like a baby.

That night, after finishing most of his assignments and deciding he was too exhausted to deal with the rest, Clay made his way to his bedroom with Wilbur at his side to help him up the stairs before flopping down on his bed face first.

"Is everything alright?" Wilbur asked quietly. Clay regarded him for a moment, took in his worried frown and the kindness always present in his eyes, and gave him a small smile.

"Things aren't the best at the moment, but I'll be alright soon," he admitted, not exactly wanting to talk about his crappy day. Wilbur seemed to understand, because he merely flashed him a small smile back before exiting his room with a soft, "Sleep well, Clay."

As Clay's eyes slid shut, he did not, in fact, sleep well.



Clay found himself behind the wheel again. His eyes were pointed on the road ahead of him, flitting past his vision so fast it looked like a blur of colors rather than actual scenery. He didn't have to look to his right to know his little sister, Drista, was seated in the passenger seat.

He had this nightmare enough times to know how everything was about to play out.

Right on cue, his phone started ringing. His eyebrows furrowed, knowing exactly who it was from.

He would have to answer that call, he knew. That was his role in this story.

"Aren't you going to answer that?" a voice spoke up from the backseat. Clay felt his blood run cold as his wide eyes flicked up to the rear-view mirror. He met a steady gaze, beautiful brown eyes boring into his own.

*No no no this wasn't right. He wasn't supposed to be here.*

"What are you doing here?" he gasped out just above a whisper, even when all he wanted to do was scream.

"I'm going to watch Drista's first cross-country match too, dummy. You invited me," George laughed lightly at him, his teasing voice doing little to calm the alarms going off in Clay's head, his mind beginning to spin out of his control. His phone was still ringing, for a longer amount of time than was normal, and George asked again, "Aren't you going to answer that?"

"No," Clay choked out, feeling his whole body begin to shake as panic set into every one of his bones, though for some reason, like every single nightmare he had had before, he couldn't bring himself to stop the car. He stared at George still calmly sitting in the backseat, unaware of the horror that was about to unfold.

*He can't be here. Not when he's going to mess everything up.*

"Just answer the phone already, the ringing is annoying," Drista complained and swiped to answer the call for him. Before Clay could yell at her not to, screaming erupted from the phone's speakers, shaking the whole car with its intensity. Clay could feel pinpricks of tears in his eyes as his ex-girlfriend yelled at him through his phone speaker, knowing what was to come next and not being able to stop it.

"George, I'm sorry," Clay gasped out just before a truck hit the side of the car, suspending them into the air as everything around him stilled.

He wanted to shut his eyes tight, but he couldn't. He could hear his sister screaming, but now she wasn't the only one.

Behind him, there were the screams of another. Of the boy he would do anything for.

The car flipped over several times, more than he could count, but this time, the nightmare didn't end there. He would usually wake up by then in a cold sweat, shivering from the memory alone, haunted by those blood-curling screams, but this dream was different.

The car finally stilled with the vehicle turned on its head. The airbag was obscuring his vision, so he quickly unbuckled himself and moved away from it, falling rather ungraciously down from his seat. Every inch of his body was hurting, but he ignored it as he found his sister beside him.

She was unconscious, her head so bloodied it created streaks down her face. He couldn't even bare glancing down to see the state of her leg.

He heard a groan behind him, and that's when he remembered who else had been in the car with them. He turned behind him to find George's body crumpled up on the shattered ceiling of the car, and he hurried towards him, tears overwhelming his vision.

"George, no. No no no no not you. Not you, please," Clay pleaded between sobs as he carefully grabbed hold of George's body, bringing it up to his own and clutching him tightly. "Wake up, please. Wake up. This isn't real. This isn't real," he started repeating, like a mantra. Whether he was

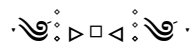
telling George to wake up or himself, he wasn't sure.

George twitched a bit, and as Clay watched him with wide eyes full of tears, the smaller boy met his gaze weakly. He watched as George's face crumpled up in disappointment, his eyes flashing with anger.

"You did this," George spoke so softly he almost hadn't heard him, before his head lolled to the side and the light from his eyes dimmed, his breathing slowing to a stop as he went still in his arms.

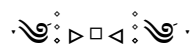
"George," Clay gasped out, shaking the lifeless body he was now holding. Tears welled up in his eyes and spilled over with no sign of stopping, his whole body convulsing as he desperately shook the boy in his arms. "George, no! Wake up! Wake up!"

His desperate sobs racked his body whole, his throat raw from screaming please as he clutched him to his chest in a futile attempt to warm George's body growing cold. His vision blurred from the tears still spilling from his eyes, just before everything around him went pitch black.



Clay awoke in the middle of the night to his whole body shaking, tears soaking into the pillow he was clutching tightly to his chest. He felt a sob claw its way up his throat, muffling the sound with his pillow as he squeezed his eyes shut, his breathing coming out ragged.

He didn't fall asleep again.



The rest of that week, George continued to avoid Clay. He hated acting this way, especially when all he wanted to do is talk to the boy, for things to go back to the way they were when George could pretend away the heartbreak that was inevitable.

George tried not to notice how tired Clay looked that week. It was killing him, the bags growing under Clay's eyes and how the light in his golden eyes had dimmed. He hoped he wasn't the cause of it, but even then, he couldn't bring himself to ask him what was wrong.

George was an asshole, but he had convinced himself that this was better in the long run. He was willing to be the villain if it meant Clay could move on sooner and find someone better that could give him everything he couldn't. So, he ignored the pang in his heart and turned away from Clay's sullen gaze.

It was Friday and Clay had had enough.

He had hardly slept that whole week thanks to his brand-new nightmare that kept him up every night and it had effectively ruined his mood throughout the day. He avoided conversation with his friends, not having the energy to explain to them what was wrong with him.

His closest friends were on his case about it, and he knew they were worried, but he didn't have the energy to explain everything to them at the moment, so he asked for some space. Thankfully, they were able to give him that for the time being.

He was also really pissed off at George for still continuing to avoid him. His patience had worn thin, and now all he wanted to do was find the Brit and slap his pretty face for acting this way.

If he didn't want to talk to Clay, then he would have to reach out to him some other way.

Lying down on his bed that afternoon, he pulled up his email on his phone and started writing him an email as his alias Dream.

**Dream** <dreamwastaken@gmail.com>  
to georgenotfound@gmail.com

George,

Hey, it's been a while. How have things been? Hope you're doing well :)

Sincerely,  
Dream

**Reply Forward**

Clay dropped his phone on his chest, staring at his ceiling blankly, silently waiting for a response. Half an hour later, when Clay was on the verge of dozing off despite fighting the pull of sleep, his phone buzzed on his chest with a new notification. It was an email back from George.

George <georgenotfound@gmail.com>  
to me

hey, it's been a while. I felt bad about how we left things last time, are things really good between us? I would still like us to be friends, but I understand if that's not something you're interested in.

**Reply Forward**

Clay felt his gaze soften reading George's words. He may have pissed him off, but he still liked this boy a whole lot.

With everything that had happened, he had completely forgotten about the confession he had sent George as Dream, and how Dream had gotten rejected by George because George already liked someone else. Back then he didn't realize that George's crush was actually Clay himself. Try explaining that ten times fast.

It made a small smile slip on his face then, realizing he had actually gotten rejected in favor of himself.

George wasn't yet aware of this, of course.

**Dream** <dreamwastaken@gmail.com>  
to georgenotfound@gmail.com

George,

Things are good between us, don't worry, I would still love to be your friend! I've had time to process what you told me, and I'm alright with it. But may I ask, how's it going with this crush of yours? Any new developments? I'm pretty good at giving love advice, I've been told ;)

Your Cupid,  
Dream

**Reply Forward**

Clay felt a little silly still playing dumb, but he knew he couldn't reveal to George he was Dream right this moment, what with George actively avoiding him at school. And maybe it was messed up to get George to open up about Clay without realizing he *was* talking to Clay, but at this point, he was grasping at straws and was desperate to know what had gone so wrong.

It could backfire on him in the future, but at that moment, he was too sleep-deprived to think that far.

**George** <georgenotfound@gmail.com>  
to me

things aren't the best right now, the person likes me back but that's just the problem :/

**Reply Forward**

Clay read the email, and then reread it, his expression growing more and more confused.

**Dream** <dreamwastaken@gmail.com>  
to georgenotfound@gmail.com

George,

Isn't that a good thing? Your crush likes you back, so why is that the problem?

Confused,  
Dream

**Reply Forward**

**George** <georgenotfound@gmail.com>  
to me

I'm only going to be here for the next 6 months and then I'll be back in the UK, a whole ocean away from him. I should have never let it get this far, but I got selfish because I like him so much. I'm only going to end up breaking his heart once I have to leave, and long-distance relationships rarely work out, that's just the reality. That's why it's a problem that he likes me, because it means I'm going to hurt him in the end, whether it's now or in the future. It was so much easier when I thought my feelings would never be reciprocated because I could just suck it up on my own, but now I have to put his feelings into consideration, also.

**Reply Forward**

As Clay read the email, his frown deepened as a mix of emotions overcame him. A part of him thought it was sort of sweet that George was considering his feelings, but another part was getting annoyed that George was making this decision for him. Now that he knew the reason behind George avoiding him, he could understand it somewhat, but it still sort of pissed him off.

This relationship, or whatever it was at the moment, included two people, and thus, shouldn't those two come to a decision, not one deciding for the both of them? He hadn't even asked Clay for his thoughts on it, and he could have easily talked it out with him first instead of deciding everything for him from the get-go.

**Dream** <dreamwastaken@gmail.com>  
to georgenotfound@gmail.com



George,

Have you considered that maybe the other person wouldn't agree with your decision? Have you considered that maybe, he would be willing to go through all of that with you, before you decided to take the easy way out and decide everything for him?

George, it's a bit unfair that you're making this decision for him. He's a person with feelings, and he might have his own opinion or take on the matter. Haven't you considered that you may be hurting him even more so by doing this?

I think you should talk this out with him first or at least help him understand why you're doing what you're doing.

Dream

**Reply      Forward**

Before a response from George could even come in, Clay was already typing out another email and sending it. Once it was sent, he shut off his phone, and set it on the nightstand beside his bed, finally allowing the grip of sleep to take him under.

**Dream** <dreamwastaken@gmail.com>  
to georgenotfound@gmail.com

Don't send anything back. Think about what I said over the weekend, and we'll talk more on Monday.

I want to talk to you in person. I think it's about time you knew who I was.

**Reply      Forward**

·👁️▶◻◀️👁️·

George nearly dropped his phone on his face at the last email. He sat up on his bed, reading and rereading the last email Dream had sent him.

He was finally going to find out who Dream was.

A million thoughts raced through his mind, a flurry of emotions overtaking him.

Monday could not come any sooner.



That night, as his eyes slid shut and sleep overtook him, George dreamed.

He was standing in the middle of a flower field, the breeze picking up and blowing his hair every which way, disturbing the peaceful meadow and making the flowers around him sway to the delicate pull of the wind.

For a moment he believed he was alone, until someone grabbed his hand and whirled him around, pulling him closely towards their chest. George was too startled to speak, looking up to be met with kind, golden eyes and a beautiful smile looking down at him.

"Clay," he breathed out, just as the taller boy wrapped his other arm around George's waist and brought him closely to him, his other hand still holding George's up and beside them as if they were dancing. George subconsciously raised his free arm to Clay's shoulder, gazing into his eyes in confusion. "What are you doing?"

"Call me Dream," Clay spoke softly, swaying the two of them to the current of the wind picking up around them. George felt himself stiffen, his eyebrows furrowing.

"Why? You're not Dream," George stammered out, not understanding. Clay's gaze never left his as George felt his feet lift off the ground, the wind whirling around them so quickly they were being swept up by it. Despite the wind picking up around them, Clay looked almost ethereal, as if it were merely a soft breeze that was rustling through his clothes and golden strands of hair.

"But you want me to be," Clay smiled knowingly, twirling George with one hand, making him yelp since the two were still airborne. He was pulled back to Clay, and George wrapped his arms around him so he wouldn't be swept away by the breeze, or somehow fall back down to the ground now too far from view.

"I know you're not Dream. Sapnap said-"

"Sapnap could have lied," Clay shrugged easily, leaning in close to George and wrapping his arms around his frame. Now the two were hugging in mid-air, the wind around them suddenly still. Clay's face was resting beside his, his voice speaking directly into George's ear. "There's a part of you that doesn't believe him. That doesn't want to believe him."

"I can't believe you're Dream," George murmured truthfully into Clay's chest, clutching him tightly. "It'll just hurt more to believe you are and then be let down when I find out who Dream truly is. It wouldn't be fair to them."

Clay said nothing, and then his hands moved from George's back to his shoulders, pushing him back and away from him. George panicked and gripped onto Clay's hands, holding tightly as the whirlwind around them suddenly picked up, beginning to pull them apart. He interlocked their fingers, the pinprick of tears beginning to sting his eyes as he gazed at Clay's peaceful expression.

"Don't go," George gasped out desperately, already feeling his grip on Clay begin to loosen. Clay merely smiled at him, and then George could hold onto him no longer, the pull of the tornado around them too strong.

"You let go of me first, George," Clay said just before they were pulled in opposite directions, and in the blink of an eye Clay was out of view and George was free falling.

George jolted awake from his dream to stare at Karl's bedroom ceiling, his fingers tingling to reach out for someone that wasn't there to begin with.

## Chapter End Notes

uh uh uh I just noticed I never posted three chapters I already had written onto ao3???  
So sorry ahhh !!! :) I'll post the other two in the next few days! And hopefully finish  
up this fic in the near future because jesus it's been so long... Also hello everyone! I  
missed you all and I hope this finds you well <3

- Kirbs -

## Chapter 28

### Chapter Summary

Love, Dream nation, the chapter you've all been waiting for (and for a painfully long time) has finally arrived along with George's visa. Cheers.

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It was Saturday morning, and Wilbur could hear Clay speaking to someone in his room through their shared wall. He crept out of bed, slowly making his way to the other's bedroom to see Clay sitting on his bed, still in a white t-shirt and shorts and looking as though he hadn't gotten much sleep at all. He was holding his phone up to his ear, saying something to the person on the other end.

"Yeah, I'm sorry I've been out of it this week. But I'll explain everything, I promise. Can you call Karl—" Clay cut himself off when Wilbur lightly knocked on the open door, glancing to meet Wilbur's questioning gaze. He flashed him a small smile, gesturing him inside the room. "Sorry Wilbur, did I wake you?"

"No, I was getting up anyway," Wilbur replied as he walked in and sat down on Clay's bed next to him, not mentioning how Clay had woken him many other nights that week when he could hear him crying in his sleep.

"Yeah, Wilbur's up," Clay said to the person on the phone, and then tapped on his screen to put the call on speaker. "Sapnap says hi."

"Morning, Wilbur," Sapnap's voice said from the phone's speaker, and Wilbur grinned and said good morning back.

"Oh, I was meaning to talk to you about this, too, along with a few others..." Clay trailed off then, looking at Wilbur hesitantly. Wilbur remained silent, waiting for him to continue, and then Clay smiled bashfully. "I had an idea last night and I could use all the help I could get."



George had a whirlwind of thoughts on his mind when he walked down the halls of school the following Monday, Karl at his side and going on about some book he had been reading over the weekend.

Just as Dream had asked him to, he had thought over what they had told him over the weekend. He had done a lot of thinking, and overthinking, too.

Dream was probably right and it was unfair that George was acting this way without talking to Clay about it first, but now he didn't know how to go about having that conversation with Clay. Not to mention how now he was going to find out who Dream was, which was kind of sending him into a spiral of panic after that dream he had on Friday.

He had told himself not to get his hopes up on who Dream was because really it could be anybody, but that dream had not made it very easy. A seed of hope had been planted in his heart, and he knew it was only a matter of time before green broke through the soil.

As George and Karl arrived at their locker, Sapnap walked up to the pair with a wide grin present on his face. George pretended to gag as Sapnap pressed a kiss to Karl's cheek, the latter letting out a happy giggle in reaction.

"Jealous, Georgie? It's okay, I can share," Karl teased as Sapnap started making kissy noises while approaching George. George sidestepped him, scrunching up his face in mock disgust.

"I think I'll pass," George grinned as Sapnap rolled his eyes and claimed he was missing out, to which Karl let out another fond laugh.

As the trio made their way to their homeroom, they ran into Wilbur and Clay just as they were entering the classroom. George startled at seeing him so early in the day, but really, he should've prepared himself for it since they had their first class together. Clay still had to use crutches to move around, and George noticed the cast he still wore now had a variety of signatures and messages on it, none of which were from him.

"Hey," George spoke up without thinking. Clay stopped to regard him, something unreadable on his expression. Karl, Sapnap, and Wilbur slipped inside, glancing at the pair and whispering amongst themselves, but George was too focused on Clay to overhear what they said.

"Good morning," Clay smiled at him slightly. There were still dark bags under his eyes from lack of sleep, and he still looked incredibly worn down, but there was an openness in his expression he hadn't worn the week prior. George swallowed past the guilt clawing at his throat as he shifted uneasily.

"I need to...I need to talk to you," George let out uneasily, glancing away from Clay's steady gaze. Clay regarded him for a moment, and it took every fiber in George's body not to squirm under his gaze.

"Let's talk later, okay?" Clay said softly, and with that he walked into the classroom, leaving a stunned George behind. George furrowed his brows and followed in after him, making his way to his own seat, his gaze following Clay until he was seated at his respective seat by the window, expression unreadable.

He wasn't sure what to make of Clay's curt response.

·☹️:▷◁:☹️·

Clay had already rushed out the door before the bell had even finished ringing, and though his crutches slowed him down, George was unable to pack up his things on time and catch up to him,

losing him amongst the crowd of students already filling the hallways. George slumped slightly, both frustrated at Clay's avoidance and at himself for having avoided Clay first.

He was getting a taste of his own medicine, he supposed.

He didn't run into Clay the next few classes, which was surprising since the six-foot-three football star currently maneuvering around in crutches stuck out like a sore thumb. Sapnap wasn't of much help in tracking him down, either, almost as if he was helping Clay avoid him, too.

The second lunch rolled around, however, Sapnap suddenly appeared by George's side and pressed a sticky note on the palm of his hand.

"Better get to it, lover boy," Sapnap winked, before spinning on his heel and waltzing away with Karl in tow, who merely shot him a smile and thumbs up before they were gone. Perplexed by the action and too caught off guard to stammer out a response before their departure, George glanced down at the little green paper now covering his hand. There was black writing on it.

*Hi George! Let's play a little game.*

*Remember how you said you would give me 3 shots to prove myself to you? Well, I'm giving you 3 shots to figure out who I am. If you don't figure it out from those 3 clues, then either your memory is terrible or you're incredibly dense lmao.*

*Find Wilbur, he'll give you the first set of clues.*

*- Dream :)*

George felt his heart drop as he read the message. He almost couldn't believe it was finally happening. He was finally going to find out who Dream was.

But how did Dream know Wilbur? Or Sapnap? Were they an acquaintance? A good friend?

Could they be...

Green was visible above the soil, its roots clutching firmly to the edges of his heart. He attempted to stomp it down, but the seed had been there for a long time now, growing roots beneath the surface without him knowing, and this was the drop of water it needed to finally break through.

Despite every warning being screamed at him in his mind, he dared to imagine the very real possibility that Dream could be—

"George," a familiar voice spoke by his side. George nearly jumped out of his skin, not realizing he had been lost in thought while staring at the sticky note in his hand. He was ripped out of his daydream to be met with light brown eyes gazing down at him.

"Wilbur!" George blurted out in surprise, to which earned him a chuckle from said man. George's eyes flickered between the green note in his hand and his British friend. "You know Dream?!"

"Here's your first clue," Wilbur ignored his question to instead slip another green sticky note into his hand. With a smile, he chimed, "Have fun," before he walked off without another word. George was met with another note, the same handwriting as the first one covering its front and back.

**(Front)**

*Okay, I'll be completely honest with you now. I lied before.*

*You do know me. We've spoken MANY times, as a matter of fact.*

*You're probably going to figure out right away who I am, and when you do, I hope you're not too mad I kept my identity a secret, and that maybe, you'll come to understand why.*

**(Back)**

*Head to your homeroom class. You'll find I forgot a textbook there.*

*- Dream*

George didn't have to think twice when he turned on his heel and booked it down the hall. He maneuvered past students still loitering about, his heart slamming against his chest as he neared the classroom he sought after.

It was empty. He didn't expect anyone to be there since, after all, it was their lunch period, but the empty classroom was almost unsettling to George at that moment. He tentatively walked in, quickly taking note of the single textbook conveniently placed on his own table.

So either Dream knew where he sat, or it was just a pretty freaky coincidence.

He picked up the textbook, checking the front and back covers for a name he would not find. He opened up the front to be met with another green note stuck to the first page of the textbook, writing once again filling the front and back of it.

**(Front)**

*If you recall, I had left some of my textbooks here one time I ran into you after school.*

*You didn't know it then, or at least you didn't know the full story, but I was having a not-so-great day.*

*You were there for me when I needed it the most, and that wasn't the only time. I had just met you, but already you made me feel safe enough to be vulnerable around you.*

*Thank you for being there.*

George's hand shook where he clutched onto the note like a lifeline. His throat had run dry. The little sapling had grown into a vine, curling around his heart, reaching his lungs, suffocating him. There was no denying it now, the evidence was irrefutable. He had only one after-school encounter in this classroom.

He had forgotten the moment until then. Not much time had passed, and yet it felt as though it had occurred an eternity ago.

With shaking hands and a shakier heart, he flipped the note over.

**(Back)**

*Head over to the football stadium. Check the bleachers.*

*- Dream*

George was running this time, the textbook and note still in the grip of his hand. It took him a while to reach the stadium, but it would have taken him longer if he had walked. The football team was out on the field practicing, and he noticed his British friends were seated on the bleachers on one side, chattering amongst themselves as they indulged in whatever food they had brought with them. As George neared them, Tommy took note of his presence first.

"Heyyyy, Gogy! Took you long enough. Where have ya been?" Tommy exclaimed through a mouthful of his food. Nikki and Tubbo were looking at him now with a mix of puzzlement and curiosity in their features while Wilbur merely gazed at him with a knowing smile.

"I think someone left something for you on that top bleacher," Wilbur spoke up, pointing away from the group and towards a row of bleachers further away. Ignoring the questions the statement pulled out of Tommy and Tubbo, George wasted no time in heading up the rows of bleachers in the direction Wilbur had indicated. Once he reached it, he glanced around, not finding that familiar green sticky note. He glanced back down at Wilbur in confusion, who merely raised his eyebrows at him and pointed downwards with his finger. George looked down at his feet before kneeling down, discovering the note was stuck on the underside of the seat. He quickly unstuck it, straightening back up and hungrily reading the note as though he were a child that had just been given a piece of candy.

**(Front)**

*You have no idea what it meant to me that you came to watch me play, just like you promised you would.*

*I had tried not to find you in the crowd because I knew the moment I did, I wouldn't be able to focus on anything else.*

*You were smiling down at me that day. In a crowd of hundreds, your smile stood out like a fucking beacon, and true to my suspicion, I couldn't look away.*

*That was the moment I realized I had fallen for you.*

Flowers were blooming in George's chest, and the smile that broke onto his face was brighter still than the smile he had given to this boy back then.

**(Back)**

*Come to my locker. Hurry.*

*147*

*- Dream*

George scrambled down the bleachers two at a time, his heart pounding in his ears as he clutched the notes to his chest. His feet were hitting the asphalt when Wilbur called out to him.

"Go get him, tiger!" he yelled with a wide smile. George turned back to him, his face scrunching up in amusement as he felt a sort of deja vu overtake him.

"Do not say that ever again," George called back, laughing because he couldn't help it. Tommy



and Tubbo were beyond confused at this point, though Niki was looking at him with a wide smile now. Wilbur merely shrugged.

"I said it was a cheesy line, but he insisted I say it. Don't shoot the messenger," Wilbur retaliated with a grin. George shook his head fondly, turning to run back out of the stadium.

The person that had first said that cheesy line to him was present in his mind as he rushed inside the building. He finally reached the locker he was looking for, his breathing coming out labored from all the running. He ignored the stares of students idling by as he turned the lock three times clockwise before putting in the combination that was written on it.

The lock clicked and opened. He tore the locker door open, his body shaking from the euphoria overtaking him.

*It was him. It had always been him.*

He slipped the textbook he was still holding inside the locker before noticing a green sticky note stuck to the inside door of the locker. He quickly unstuck it.

### **(Front)**

*This was where we kissed for a second time.*

*I can't believe I can even say that. That we've kissed. And more than once?? Can't even begin to comprehend that.*

*The funniest part is, we've kissed twice and I still don't have your #. How lame am I? I couldn't even muster up the courage to ask for it.*

### **(Back)**

*Here's mine: +1-407-\*\*\*-\*\*\**

*Call me? ;)*

George pulled out his phone, nearly dropping it from how he scrambled to get it out of his back pocket. He opened up the keypad to put in the phone number and then stared at the series of numbers filling his screen. The call button taunted him, and with a shaky exhale, he pressed it.

The number was already saved onto his phone, just as he knew it would be. After all, Minx had given him this boy's number. As the call went through, Dream's real name appeared on George's screen, sending his heart into a frenzy. His phone rung in his ear once, twice, three times, before silence filled it.

"Clay," George finally spoke past the dryness in his throat. He could hear the smile in Clay's voice.

"George. Come and find me. The butterflies are waiting for you."

The call ended just as soon as it had begun, and George didn't waste a second as he slammed the locker shut, put the lock back on, pocketed his phone and the five green sticky notes in his back pocket, and ran down the hall to the double doors leading out the back of the school.

It took a while for George to remember his way through the hedge maze, but once he emerged into the center patio of the place, he froze in his tracks as he stared at the familiar glass dome building in the center of it.

Dream was waiting for him inside.

No, not Dream. *Clay*.

It was all George needed to force his feet to move forward, taking him through the first door leading inside the entryway to the dome. He reached the second door, his hand gripping onto the doorknob tightly as he willed his breathing to even itself.

He pulled it open.

There sat Dream. He was looking off to the side at a blue butterfly flitting close to him before his eyes flicked over to where George now stood next to the open doorway. His eyes shone golden in the light pouring in from the outside, casting his hair in a similar glow. George once again wished he could see the color green.

And then he was smiling at George. His eyes crinkled up in the edges and his mouth quirked up in what looked almost like relief. The tired hunch present in his shoulders seemed to seep out of him as his back straightened, as though his battery were being energized with George's mere presence. George shut the door behind him, holding onto the doorknob to resist the urge to rush forward towards the boy seated beside a pair of crutches.

"You found us, George," he grinned widely at him. George let out a small laugh.

"You are such a cheeseball, Clay," George smiled brightly. Clay's eyes softened as he quirked his head to the side, his smile so incredibly fond it hurt George to see it.

"Can you blame me, Georgenotfound?"

And then George was running. Clay had little time to brace himself as George practically threw himself onto the boy, wrapping his arms around him and clutching Clay tightly to his chest.

"It was you all along. You should have told me, fucker," George muttered without any real heat. He could feel Clay laughing against him as he nuzzled his face further into George's chest, his strong arms coming up to wrap around George's waist and bring him down closer to him.

"I wanted to. But after that one email I sent you, I was scared to lose you twice," Clay explained as he hugged him tighter. George returned the gesture, mindlessly running his fingers through the back strands of Clay's hair.

"You wouldn't have lost me. I hoped so badly you were Dream. I can't believe everything you said in that email was from you."

"Oh god, now I'm embarrassed," Clay laughed again, now more nervously. George released him from his grip, frowning down at him.

"What? Why? Did you not mean it?" George asked, feeling his heart rate spike. Clay took note of his expression then, quickly stammering out an explanation.

"George, no, that's not what I meant. I meant every word in that email, I swear, it's just..." Clay trailed off, his eyes flicking away from George's as a blush blossomed on his features. He groaned in frustration, head butting George's chest so he wouldn't have to meet George's gaze. "It's just embarrassing. I'm so lame."

"You're a bleeding heart. That's not lame," George insisted, grabbing hold of either side of Clay's face and forcing him to look back up at George. George smiled honestly as he ignored the growing heat on his face. "Rather, I like that about you."

Clay stared at him for a moment like a deer caught in headlights, his face so red he would have looked like a tomato if George were able to see the color. And then he was smiling so widely, his eyes twinkling from honest to God happiness, that George couldn't help but lean down towards him, hesitantly inching towards the other boy's face, making his intentions clear.

Clay met him halfway, his head tilting slightly to slot their lips together perfectly. George was more tentative, his inexperience clear, but Clay helped guide him through it, one of his hands coming up to tilt George's face slightly and effectively deepen the kiss.

It felt as though firecrackers were erupting in George's chest, and he was so darn happy at that moment that George couldn't hold back the smile that overtook his face, effectively ruining the kiss as happy giggles began pouring out of him. Pretty soon Clay was letting out chuckles of his own, and then the two were leaning against each other as the euphoria of the moment caused them to burst out into laughs and wheezes.

"God, George," Clay let out between laughs, settling down enough to look up at him with the softest smile George had ever seen. "What burning orphanage did I save in my past life to deserve this?"

"Oh god, shut up," George laughed lightly, moving to finally sit down beside Clay on the bench. Clay pressed their shoulders together, making George smile giddily.

"Forgive me for not telling you I was Dream?" Clay blinked his eyes innocently at him, looking too much like a puppy for George's liking. George rolled his eyes fondly, lightly bumping their shoulders.

"I forgive you. I can sort of understand why you kept it a secret," George replied. Clay smiled at him before leaning down to rest his head on the crook of George's shoulder. George stiffened only for a moment before relaxing against him, bringing the two boys closer together as George let his head fall atop Clay's messy array of blond hair.

"So," Clay spoke up.

"So," George replied with a smile.

"So...what does this mean?" Clay continued just above a whisper. George peered down at him questioningly as Clay tilted his head a bit to look up at the other. "What are we?"

George stiffened again. He felt his throat close up as his heart rate picked up anxiously. He knew Clay felt the sudden change because his eyebrows furrowed in concern at whatever expression George was wearing at that moment.

"George? What's wrong?"

"I, um," George stammered out past the knot in his throat. Clay shifted away from him, George instantly missing the touch. Clay turned to assess him fully now, his expression serious as his eyes

scanned George's face. George couldn't bring himself to meet them.

A few beats of tense silence passed before Clay lifted his hand to lightly knock on George's forehead. "What's going on in there?"

"I'm leaving in six months," George blurted out. Clay froze beside him but remained quiet, waiting for George to gather his thoughts and continue. George stared down at his hands, wringing them together. "I'll be back in the U.K., and you'll be here."

"Right, that's true..." Clay said softly, gaze still searching George's suddenly closed-off one. "So?"

"So!?" George burst out, whirling to face Clay, his expression incredulous. "So, I'll be gone and we won't see each other for years after—possibly never again!"

"You don't know that," Clay rebuked quickly. George scoffed, and he ignored the guilt he felt at the hurt that flashed in Clay's face.

"I'm just being realistic. I don't have the luxury of coming to America whenever I want—my family barely had sufficient funds to allow me to join this student exchange program. Once I leave, there is the very real possibility that I may never see you again."

"And I'm saying that you don't know that for sure!" Clay insisted, his voice rising along with his temper. "You don't know that I won't be able to go on vacation over there and visit you! You don't know that I won't be able to buy you a ticket to come and visit! Don't decide everything for me, George! We can figure it out!"

"I don't want you to be using money on me like that, Clay!" George retaliated, running a hand through his hair roughly out of his own growing frustration. "And so what, you want to become a couple? For six months? And then after, just 'figure out' how to make it work long distance?"

"Yes, George, that's exactly what I want! And you're giving up before we've even given it a shot!"

"Be realistic! Long distance relationships rarely work out, Clay!"

"So what if the odds are against us? I'm willing to try—"

"I don't want to end up hurting you!" George yelled out desperately. Clay fell silent then, his eyes becoming unreadable to George. A wry smile made itself present on his features as he shook his head in what appeared to be disappointment.

"You're hurting me right now," Clay replied softly, and George wasn't a stranger to the underlying hurt present in his voice. He felt the guilt eating away at him, making George turn away from that forlorn expression.

"Better now than six months in the future, don't you think?" George muttered lowly.

"That's not fair."

"It'll be harder then, you know that, right?" George choked out, hating the way his voice cracked at the end. He laughed dryly, feeling pinpricks in his eyes. "God, Clay, we've known each other for what, two weeks? And with just two weeks, I already..."

George trailed off. Clay leaned closer to him, sensing his distress. He gently placed his hand atop George's. "You already what?"

George slowly flipped his hand over, allowing for Clay's fingers to lace through his own. George stared at their interlocked hands, feeling Clay's thumb as it began to graze over George's knuckles in reassurance. He instinctively leaned closer to Clay, their heads butting together softly as George peered up at him through the strands of hair nearly covering his eyes. "It's barely been two weeks, and I already like you so fucking much."

Clay was silent for a moment before whispering. "I like you so fucking much, too."

George let out a soft, incredulous laugh before it was cut off by Clay's lips being pressed against his own. George pulled away quickly, muttering out a soft "Clay" in warning, but then Clay was kissing him again, and he was too weak to push him away a second time. The kiss was soft, gentle, and finally, Clay pulled away to rest their foreheads together once more.

"It's going to suck so much," George whispered into the distance between them. "It already hurts thinking about leaving even now, after knowing each other for less than a month. If we get any closer than this..." George trailed off as he sucked in a shaky breath, shutting his eyes tight against the mere thought. "I don't know how I'll ever find the will to leave."

"They'll just have to drag you back," Clay chimed in. George let out a soft snort, squeezing their interlocked hands.

"I'm being serious, idiot."

"I am too, idiot," Clay whispered, squeezing back. George watched helplessly as Clay lifted their joint hands up to his mouth, softly pressing his lips to the back of George's hand. It took every fiber in George's body not to melt at the action.

"Why do you have to make this so difficult?" George questioned honestly. Clay's eyes slid forward to meet George's, and he found he couldn't look away from the intensity of his gaze.

"I want to try."

"Clay—"

"George, please. Just...hear me out."

George fell silent, letting his eyes slide shut. He sighed before peering back up at him. "Fine."

"We can give it a shot. Six months is still a long way to go, and who knows what will happen in that time. We can try taking it slow and see where it leads us and just—deal with whatever comes when it comes. Living in the future instead of the present will only make us wonder about the 'what ifs' of the past down the road."

"But what if we come to regret it? What if when the time comes, it becomes too hard to say goodbye?" George countered. Clay lightly squeezed George's hand.

"I think we'll regret it more if we don't try in the first place. And it doesn't have to be 'goodbye'," Clay leaned away from George so he could gaze down at him fully. He flashed him a small, almost sad smile. "It can just be a 'see you later'."

"Clay—"

"If you really don't want to try, then just say so now. I'll back off completely and we can just be friends if that's what you truly want. You just have to say the word," Clay said suddenly, his eyes boring into George with an intensity that George couldn't look away from. George found himself

shaking his head quickly in response.

"No. No, I don't want that either. I don't," George groaned in frustration, letting his head fall. "I don't know what I want anymore. I thought...I thought it would be easier if things ended before they even got a chance to start, but now...now I don't want to go back to being just...friends."

"I don't either," Clay said. George shook his head again, wondering how things could've derailed this much that he was actually considering giving in to the boy.

"I'm just...scared of losing you," George admitted so quietly that Clay barely managed to hear him. The taller boy wasted no time in releasing his hold on George's hand to instead wrap his arms around the smaller boy's frame, bringing him flush against his chest. Clay let his head rest atop George's mess of brown hair.

"Then don't."

"It's not that easy."

"But it can be, if you're willing to try," Clay murmured into his hair. George felt as fingers began carding through the strands atop his head, making him sigh against Clay's chest. "You won't lose me. We will be friends first no matter what happens, okay? Even if things don't work out, I won't ever stop being your friend."

George slipped out of Clay's hold to hold up his hand between them, his pinky finger extended towards him. "Promise me. Promise me we will continue to be friends even if it doesn't work out. Call me selfish, but...I want you in my life no matter what happens."

Clay lifted his own pinkie to hook it through George's tightly. "I want the same. And I promise."

"Thank you," George breathed out in relief. Clay smiled at him fondly, tilting his head to the side.

"Does this mean I can ask you out now?" Clay pondered seriously. George felt himself smile despite himself, but before Clay could open his mouth to say anything else, George lifted a finger to Clay's lips.

"Wait. Let's make a deal. Or a...a pact, of sorts."

"Didn't we kind of already make one?"

"Just, let me explain," George insisted. Clay shut his mouth, nodding at George to continue. "These next six months, we will go out. We can take it slow, but we won't tell anyone we are anything more than friends." Clay was silent for a moment, digesting George's words.

"People are going to figure it out. I've been told I'm not the most subtle person," Clay pointed out.

"You don't have to lie about your feelings if you don't want to," George explained, and then shrugged. "You just...won't be telling people everything."

Clay blinked twice, his eyebrows furrowing. "We can't even tell our friends?"

"No."

"Can you...explain why?"

George glanced over at a yellow butterfly that had landed on a flower near the two of them,

watching as its wings fluttered slightly before it took flight once more. He took a moment to gather his thoughts before turning back towards Clay. "You've been in relationships before, but I haven't, and honestly, the whole prospect of being in one is pretty scary. There's so much pressure that comes with being in a relationship and people knowing about it. Me wanting to be with you still terrifies me on its own considering I practically just met you, and even though it feels like I already know you so well, I know there's still so much about you I *don't* know."

"I want to get to know you without feeling that pressure from others expecting us to act a certain way with each other or from people thinking they can criticize our relationship. Just because we are more than friends doesn't mean it has to be their business."

"You're a pretty private person, aren't you?" Clay noted. George didn't know how to respond to that, but he couldn't say there was no truth to the statement. "I understand why it would be scary to enter a relationship when you've never been in one before. This is the first time I've wanted to be with a guy, so in a way, this is new territory for me, too."

"Yeah, don't get me started on that," George chuckled softly. "I had a whole crisis when I realized I had not-very-platonic feelings towards you."

"Same! I finally understood what they call good ol' 'gay panic'." Clay smiled at the small laugh that was pulled out of George from that statement. "But then...what do you want us to be?"

George reached forward to grab onto both of Clay's hands, squeezing them tightly between his. "We will get to know each other and take it slow for as long as we are able to and see how things go. But for now, we won't have a label, so you're not allowed to ask me to be your boyfriend."

"What?" Clay said incredulously, but George wasn't done.

"It'll make it easier to keep a secret from everyone if we don't actually make it official right away. And if by some miracle we make it work long distance, or at the very least we still have feelings for each other by the end of high school, then..." George stared directly into Clay's eyes, hoping he could understand the underlying promise in his words. "The day you graduate, ask me properly."

"To be my boyfriend?" Clay questioned, seemingly still processing George's words. George nodded, staring intensely at Clay and hoping he had understood the promise he was making him in turn.

*That he will say yes.*

Clay fell silent again, processing George's words before nodding slightly, his expression resolute.

"Okay," Clay replied simply. He was then leaning forward to press a soft kiss against George's temple.

The action felt as though Clay had understood him and then made a promise of his own.

## Chapter End Notes

This has still got to be in my top 5 favorite chapters I've written for this fic :]

next chapter should be out sometime this week!

- Kirbs \_



## Chapter 29

### Chapter Summary

"we're just friends!" \*proceeds to act like a married couple\*

### Chapter Notes

highly recommend listening to Nothing by Bruno Major while reading this chapter  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucRVDoFkcxc>

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

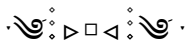
After the events of that Monday during lunch, with both George and Clay suspiciously arriving late to class, their friends were quick to begin asking questions.

When Sapnap, Wilbur, Karl and Alyssa, who had helped Clay execute his plan to tell George he was Dream, asked Clay how it had gone, he simply smiled softly at them and said an ambiguous, "It went well."

When they asked if they had become an item, Clay laughed and shook his head, replying with, "No, George and I are friends." This statement was received by disbelief every time.

Similarly, when George was bombarded with questions from Minx and Niki, he simply waved them off and told them with a distant smile, "Clay and I are friends."

But if Clay and George seemed to smile a little wider, if they seemed to gravitate a little closer, if their feet, shoulders, and hands seemed to constantly find a reason to brush against the other's, and if it became so painfully clear that the two were anything *but*, everyone simply pretended not to notice.



"How was your first week back on the football team?" George's voice spoke into Clay's ear through the speaker of his phone. Clay straightened his back against the headboard of his bed, glancing down at his foot that was now cast-free.

"It was good. Felt a little weird doing drills after needing to move around with the help of crutches for like four weeks, but I'm slowly getting used to being out of a cast again."

"I'm surprised you only needed to have it on for four weeks, honestly. I would have thought you would need to have it on for much longer considering it was a fracture," George said. Clay

hummed in agreement, turning a bit to let his back drop against the mattress of his bed.

"Yeah, the doctor said I was lucky my ankle healed so fast considering everything. If I had walked on it for longer, though, it definitely would have extended the amount of time it would've taken to heal."

"It's a good thing we dragged you to the hospital that one time, then," George chuckled softly, making Clay smile. George then added a soft, "Stubborn motherfucker," which made Clay burst out into laughter and wheezes.

"So what will you be up to today? It's a Saturday, you should use the opportunity to go out," Clay said once his laughter had subsided. He could hear George shifting to reposition himself on his own bed on the other side of the call, the ruffle of blankets enough indication.

"Karl is staying at Sarnap's house for the weekend and Karl's brother went with his mom on a short business trip. I'm home alone for the weekend and don't have any plans to do anything, so I'll probably just be sleeping in a lot."

Clay whistled. "Karl is staying at Sarnap's house this weekend? You don't say." He was *so* going to tease Sarnap about that on Monday.

"Well, yeah, tomorrow *is* Valentine's Day. And they wanted to spend it together like the disgusting couple they are," George fake gagged, making Clay chuckle softly. George grew silent on the other side, before almost hesitantly asking, "Hey, Clay?"

"What's up?"

"Do you...want to come over?"

Clay shot up to a sitting position then, his heart rate spiking considerably. "You want me to come over?"

Silence, and then a quiet, "Yeah."

"What-What about Mrs. Jacobs? Would she be fine with that?"

"I'm sure she wouldn't have minded if she were home. And if not, then...n-nobody has to know you were here."

"Oh...okay," Clay breathed out, contradicting the way he was internally screaming his head off. "Tomorrow is Valentine's Day."

"Yeah," George replied, his voice cracking a bit. "You can stay the night if you want." Clay swallowed roughly, willing his heart to chill the fuck out for two seconds.

"Well, then...I'll head over there in a bit," Clay murmured, suddenly feeling dizzy.

"I'll be waiting," George replied quickly before the call disconnected. Clay stared down at his phone with wide eyes, seriously considering if he had imagined the whole conversation.

In a daze, he scrambled off of his bed, going to his closet to get a clean set of clothes along with an extra set he stuffed into the first empty backpack he could find. He rushed out of his room towards the bathroom only to nearly collide against Wilbur's chest.

"Will!" Clay squeaked, looking up at the Brit. "Sorry, hey!"

"Where are you going in such a hurry, Clay?" Wilbur asked slyly, a smile stretching on his lips. Clay willed down the blush that threatened to overtake his face.

"The, um...shower," Clay tried sidestepping Wilbur only for his path to be blocked again.

"That was George on the phone, right?" Wilbur asked innocently. Clay felt his face burn bright red then. *Stupid paper-thin walls.*

"I, uh..."

"I think your brother just got out of the shower so it should be vacant," Wilbur changed the subject suddenly, gesturing towards the direction of the bathroom. Clay nodded stiffly before rushing off to enter it, shutting the door behind him quickly and thanking God *that* conversation was over before it started.

He showered as quickly as he could, rushing to get changed and style his hair so it didn't look like he had just rolled out of bed. He was back out of the bathroom in no time, rushing to get a few things packed in his backpack before hoisting it over one shoulder and getting his keys off of the nightstand.

"I'll take care of your siblings, don't worry," Wilbur spoke up as Clay passed by his room. He glanced inside, noticing Wilbur was sitting on his bed, his guitar in hand.

"Thanks, Will," Clay replied honestly. Wilbur gave him a knowing smile.

"No problem. Have fun with your sneaky link."

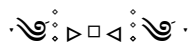
"Oh my god, he's *not*—We aren't—!" Clay began stammering, his face going bright red. Wilbur laughed at his reaction, making Clay pout. "Shut up. I'm going." He turned to continue his trajectory down the hall. He needed to make a stop by the nearest Walmart, first.

*Chocolates. And maybe flowers? Would he even like receiving flowers? Was that too cheesy?*

"Don't forget to use protection!" Wilbur called after him, making Clay nearly trip down the stairs.

"*Shut up*, Wilbur!"

He prayed to any god out there that Drista hadn't heard that.



A few hours later, the doorbell rang. George scrambled off of his bed, glancing at the mirror in Karl's room to make sure he didn't look too indecent before making his way down the stairs. He got to the door, his nerves suddenly spiking as he willed his breathing to get under control.

He pulled it open to find Clay nervously grinning down at him.

"Hey," Clay said. George returned the wobbly smile.

"Hi. Come in," George moved out of the way so Clay could enter the house before he was shutting

the door behind him. Clay dropped his backpack near the entrance, seemingly unsure of what to do next as he glanced around the place as though he were seeing it for the first time. He seemed stiff, avoiding George's gaze. The nerves were coming off of him in waves and it didn't help George's own anxiousness.

"I'm not used to the house being empty. Usually when I come over to Karl's house, there's a party going on and it's packed. Feels almost eerie when it's quiet like this," Clay commented suddenly, still looking everywhere but at George. George hummed in acknowledgment, moving past Clay and further into the house if only to ignore the sudden tension in the air between them.

"Have you done the homework that's due on Monday?" Clay continued as he trailed behind George. "I started it yesterday and I'm almost done with it. I can help you with it if you want."

"Did you come over just to do homework?" George deadpanned, turning around to look at Clay directly. He managed to catch his eye, the other freezing in his tracks before diverting his gaze again, his cheeks darkening in color.

"N-No..." Clay stammered, and he almost looked like he was pouting. "M'just sayin'." George had to bite down a smile.

"Okay. Good," George replied easily, moving into the kitchen with Clay close behind.

"Oh, have you eaten already?" Clay spoke up again, glancing at the stove located on the kitchen island. "I already ate like two hours ago but if you're hungry, I can make something for you. I'm sure Mrs. Jacobs won't mind if I use her kitchen, right? I memorized a few recipes from helping my mom make food for my siblings, so if there's something you like I can try to make it. And even if it's something I don't know how to make, I can find a recipe on the Internet and figure it out. I can pick things up really easily so it shouldn't be a problem—"

"Clay," George cut him off, both of his hands finding either side of Clay's face and pressing gently. Clay looked down at him in shock, his eyes going wide and his cheeks coloring once more. "You start rambling when you're nervous."

"Sorry. Sorry," Clay sighed, subconsciously leaning into the touch. "I don't even realize I'm doing it, sometimes."

"Don't apologize, dummy. It's nothing to apologize about," George reassured him quickly, releasing his face to instead lace his fingers through Clay's warm hands. He looked down at their hands as he softly admitted, "I like hearing you ramble. It's endearing."

Clay was left speechless, staring down at George in what could only be described as infatuation. George hesitantly met his eyes again, giving him a soft smile.

"But you don't have to be nervous. It's just me," George said. Clay nodded, a smile making itself present on his own features. George released one of his hands then, guiding Clay out of the kitchen by one hand. They reached the living room where Karl had his Apple TV mounted on one wall, a dark grey sofa positioned in front of it. He led Clay to it, taking off his shoes before flopping down on it, Clay following suit and being pulled down beside him. He ignored their very close proximity on a sofa that could easily sit five people.

"Did you want to watch something?" Clay questioned, glancing at the TV briefly before his attention diverted back to their still joint hands.

"I don't know, I thought we could watch a show or a movie or something," George replied, very

quickly realizing he had not thought any of this through. He leaned back into the couch, Clay following suit so the two were leaning their shoulders against the cushions, their bodies angled towards each other. "Do you want to?"

"Sure. Let's Netflix and chill," Clay grinned, before his face dropped as he processed his own words. "Wait. That's not what I meant."

"Oh my god."

"No! I didn't mean it like that!" Clay stammered quickly, both boy's faces going bright red. "Sorry! Sorry, I-I just meant I was down to just chill and watch a movie but not like—not like *that*—"

"Jesus, Dream," George huffed out before laughter started pouring out of him at the expression Clay was making. "Oh my god, your face! You looked so mortified—" He was cut off by his own laughter racking his body whole, causing him to fold in on himself and practically head-butt Clay's chest as he cackled to his heart's content.

"Don't—*laugh*, you asshole," Clay let out as he began laughing himself, and soon he was letting out wheezes of his own, leaning on George as the two laughed at Clay's stupidity.

And just like that, any lingering tension between the two completely dissipated, leaving only that familiar and comfortable air the two boys had grown used to. George got up to bring blankets for the two while Clay reached for the control to turn on the TV. George microwaved some popcorn bags he found in the pantry before settling under blankets next to Clay, the other placing his arm on the backrest of the couch so George could have easy access to press against Clay's side. George let his head rest against the crook of neck, Clay's head falling to rest atop George's, and as the two bickered over which movie they should put on, the distance between the two became practically nonexistent.

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"I told you we should have watched *Interstellar*," George huffed.

"*Interstellar* isn't even on Netflix, idiot," Clay countered, exiting out of the movie they had just finished watching. George turned to pout at him.

"Still. We could've rented it on Amazon prime, or something."

"What is with you and *Interstellar*? Isn't that movie almost, like, three hours long?"

"So?"

"So?? My attention span does *not* last that long. The only movies I will willingly watch that are that long are *Avengers: Endgame* and *Zack Snyder's Justice League*. And the second one was a fucking pain to stay focused on because it was *four* hours long, George. *Four*."

"Soooo, what I'm hearing is that you can make an effort to watch *Interstellar*," George quipped with an innocent grin. Clay sighed exasperatedly, by effect shifting closer to the smaller boy. Clay avoided looking down at him when George started pouting. "C'mon, Dream, you made me watch

your stupid not-like-other-girls movie."

"It's called *Not Another Teen Movie*, you absolute idiot," Clay wheezed lightly, poking George's side and causing him to yelp.

"Whatever. You made me watch that garbage so now I'm making you watch *Interstellar*."

"Oh, come on now, you don't think it was garbage," Clay peered down at George's faux scowl.

"I do, as a matter of fact."

"You thought it was funny, you liar! You laughed so many times during the movie!"

"Nope. Don't remember. Didn't happen."

"Do *not* quote *Voltron* on me right now, you ass," Clay laughed as he began attacking George's side, the other letting out a shriek of laughter as he tried and failed to swat Clay away.

"Dream! No! Stop!" George let out between laughter, slipping to the side until his back had fallen onto the couch cushions, Clay leaning over him. Clay stopped tickling him for a moment, staring down at him with a fond smile. George looked back up at him hesitantly, a puzzled smile on his face. "What?"

"You called me Dream," Clay pointed out. His eyes drank up the way George's face went a bright red.

"No I didn't. You're imagining things," he denied quickly. Clay shook his head with a laugh.

"Nope, I'm not. It's the third time today you call me Dream, actually."

"What! You're lying."

"I'm not! You really called me Dream like three times now," Clay laughed, letting his body come down to lie atop of George's, crossing his arms over George's chest and letting his head rest on them to continue gazing forward at George's blushing face. He could practically feel George's heart stuttering beneath his touch. "It's cute that you don't even realize you're doing it."

"Shut up," George breathed out, covering his face with his hands. "You're such an idiot. I hate you. And get off of me, you weigh like 200 pounds."

"Rude, I weigh 170 on a good day," Clay muttered, snuggling further into George's chest. "And I don't want to. It's comfortable here."

"God, you remind me of my dog. You're clingy like him, too."

"You have a dog?" Clay perked up. George shifted a bit under him, likely trying to get comfortable, but he didn't attempt to shove Clay off.

"Yeah. And a cat."

"What are their names?"

George grew silent, squinting up at Clay. "You're going to laugh."

"I won't, I won't. I promise I won't laugh," Clay said quickly. George stared at him for a few more seconds, as though to gauge his reaction.

"Dog and Cat."

"Huh?"

"Their names are *Dog* and *Cat*."

Clay was silent for about three seconds before he burst out laughing.

"You promised!" George gasped, offended. Clay tried to hold down his laughter, but it only made the urge to laugh stronger and had him wheezing until his lungs threatened to give out. George pouting under him did not make the situation any better.

"Oh my god, why am I not surprised you named your dog and cat—*Dog* and *Cat*," Clay let out between rounds of laughter that could rival a tea kettle's. George started cussing him out which only sent him into further hysteria.

"I've always wanted a pet. Especially a cat. But I've never had one," Clay admitted once he finally calmed down. George peered up at him silently.

"Wanna get a cat?" he asked suddenly.

"What?"

"Is there like a shelter nearby here? We can swing by one tomorrow and get a cat."

Clay stared at him silently, his brows furrowing. "I don't like that I'm not totally opposed to this idea."

With a straight face, George quipped, "Yolo."

The two of them burst out laughing, Clay hiding his face against George's chest as his laughter threatened to break the sound barrier. "Oh my god, George—never say that ever again, I beg of you."

"But seriously, let's adopt a cat tomorrow? For real? Let's do it? Let's go?"

"I don't know how my family will react to me arriving home with a *cat*," Clay said, already imagining the varying reactions he would receive from his siblings and his mom.

"That's the whole point of impulse buys! We do it on impulse and worry about the consequences later."

"I'm the only one that has to worry about the consequences, you idiot," Clay chuckled, poking George's cheek with one hand. George swatted him away quickly, pouting up at him. It took about two seconds for the remaining strands of Clay's fraying will to snap in two. "Fine. We'll go visit a shelter tomorrow."

Be damned the consequences. The brilliant smile he received from George in turn made it all worth it.

They spent a few hours playing on Karl's Nintendo switch that they connected to the TV. The two were fiercely competitive at both Mario Kart and Smash Bros, but too often Clay would accidentally start watching George instead of the TV, the way his face would look so insanely focused, his intense stare nearly digging holes into the screen and his tongue peeking out a bit in moments when he would be especially concentrated. Any time this happened, George would manage to get the upper hand, and too often it was the reason for George coming out the victor.

And though Clay would complain that the game was rigged or demand a rematch, he would silently drink up the loud spouts of laughter that would emerge from George any time he would win, and the way his whole face would light up with a beautiful shit-eating grin as he turned to rub it in Clay's face.

And if he let George win a couple of times just to see those reactions again, that was nobody's business but his own.

The hours after that they spent talking about anything that came to mind. The conversation went in so many directions that to an outsider, it could've easily given them whiplash. They were still sprawled on the sofa in front of the silent TV, long forgotten, cuddled under blankets and eating away at what remained of their popcorn bags.

Before they realized, they had lost track of time, the sun had set long ago, and it was nearing midnight. They didn't think to check the time until Clay noticed George stifling a yawn more than once, his eyes quickly growing heavy.

"Are you tired?" Clay asked softly. George blinked up at him slowly, stubbornly shaking his head.

"No. I just don't stay up late very often. I'm fine, though."

"You can go to sleep now, if you want. I don't mind."

"M'not tired," George insisted, before he was yawning again. Clay found himself yawning, too, making George smile. "Who's tired now?"

"I yawned because you yawned. Yawns are contagious."

"You know what they say about yawning if someone else yawns."

"I don't, what do they say?" Clay asked honestly, turning his body to face George fully. George seemed to rethink his words before looking away, his cheeks dusting pink.

"Never mind."

"No, George, *c'mon*, what do they say?" Clay pushed, leaning closer to the other. George scoffed and pushed Clay's face away, clear embarrassment showing in his features.

"Nothing. It's dumb. Can we change the subject now?"

Despite Clay's curiosity urging him to keep probing, he dropped it, knowing it was better than to push George *too* much. "Alright, fine. But only if you agree to go to sleep now."

"Ughhh, fine," George grumbled reluctantly, curling himself into a ball with the blankets covering them and effectively stealing them from Clay in the process.



"Don't sleep here, you idiot, go to your room," Clay laughed softly, wheezing when George peeked out from under the covers to stick his tongue out at him. "George, don't be a baby. If you keep acting like this, I will seriously *carry* you to your room."

"With those stick arms? Yeah, right."

"I'm on the football team, dumbass."

"Oh my bad, *Captain Macho*. I forgot you never skip a day at the gym, pumping iron or whatever the fuck," George drawled sarcastically. Clay got up from the sofa then, moving in front of George to tear the blankets off of him. "Hey! What're you doing! Clay, no, what're you—*DREAM!*"

Clay wrapped an arm under George's back, his other arm wrapping under the bend in his knees. George attempted to writhe out of his grip, but Clay managed to lift him off the couch and press him against his chest, carrying him bridal style.

"Put me down!" George squeaked out, his face aflame. Clay merely let out a laugh, moving away from the sofa and walking out of the living room.

"You asked for it."

"No, I didn't!"

"You were practically *daring* me to carry you," Clay rebuked, which made any argument George was about to give die on his tongue. "Wrap your arms around my shoulder, I don't want to drop you."

"You won't drop me," George muttered, but still grabbed a hold of Clay, wrapping both arms around him and pressing closer to him as a result. Clay hoped George couldn't feel the way his heart was pounding inside his chest. "I hate you, by the way."

"Sure you do," Clay tilted as they reached the stairs, Clay taking them slowly to avoid slipping and causing George to get hurt.

"I can walk, you know. I don't break my ankles like you do," George quipped, making Clay chuckle softly.

"You're such an idiot."

They eventually reached Karl's room, and Clay walked in without bothering to turn on the lights. He made his way over to George's bed, coming up beside it before dropping George on it rather ungraciously, the latter letting out a screech at the action as he fell atop his mess of blankets and pillows.

"Dr-Clay!" George sputtered out in offense as Clay burst out laughing at his reaction. "You're such an asshole!"

"Bedtime, sleeping beauty," Clay leaned down to press a kiss to George's temple without thinking. George froze under him, his face flushing a deep red.

"What about you?" George asked as Clay leaned back.

"I can use the blankets we left downstairs and make a bed on the sofa, no worries," Clay replied as he made to turn towards the doorway. "Sleep well, George."

"Wait."

Clay froze when he felt a hand encircle his wrist, preventing him from walking away any further. Clay turned to look back at George in surprise, the latter staring up at him quietly.

"George—"

"Stay. Please?" George whispered. Clay sucked in a breath, feeling his heart stutter.

"Are you sure?" he asked softly. George merely gave him a nod in return before he was pulling Clay down into the bed with him. They now laid beside each other, their bodies turned to face the other and their faces mere inches apart. Clay was once again close enough to notice the very light dusting of freckles on George's nose and cheek.

"This is giving me some major deja vu," Clay spoke lowly. A small smile spread on George's face.

"From the hospital?"

"No. From the party. But you don't really remember that, right?"

"I sort of remember it," George replied softly, his fingers playing with a blanket beneath them. "It's like a blurry memory more than anything, but I can sort of remember laying down here with you."

"Right," Clay said, shifting the smallest inch closer to George. They stared at each other for a moment through the darkness of the room, a wave of drowsiness beginning to overtake them.

"Drea—I mean, Clay."

"Call me Dream if you want," Clay smiled softly. "I like it. It's cute." George scrunched up his nose, his cheeks going pink.

"...Dream, then. Could you, uh. Could you tell me what happened that day at the party? The stuff I don't remember?"

"What do you not remember?"

"Well, practically everything after I chased you outside," George said, his eyes darting between Clay's. "I want to know what you told me in the woods because it's important to you. Please."

Clay smiled softly at the boy that held his heart in the palm of his hands. He reached forward to brush a few stray strands of hair out of George's eyes, watching him lean into his touch.

"Okay. I'll tell you everything."

And then he did.



Once Clay had finished his story, he realized it was easier to talk about now. The crash still haunted his mind at night, but at least now, it came easier to say out loud. And that was progress.

He even told him about his nightmares. He told him about the recent ones—the ones with George in the car with him and his sister. At some point during telling it, George had shifted closer to him, tucking himself under Clay's chin and wrapping his arms around Clay. Maybe he did it to reassure Clay, tell him that he was here, he was okay, or maybe George sensed Clay was on the verge of tears and knew it would be easier on Clay if he didn't see it.

When the tears did fall, Clay pressed his face against George's hair, and George said nothing of it. Instead, he merely held onto Clay tighter.

Once he was finished, George allowed Clay to silently cry in his arms. He stroked his back slowly, whispering sweet nothings in his ear, repeating over and over "It's okay" and "I'm here."

And then, when the silence between them stretched for a moment, the two of them simply breathing in each other's space, George spoke up softly, saying, "Clay, it really wasn't your fault. I hope one day you come to accept that. Your sister is okay, she's strong. From that one time I talked to her I could tell she really loves and looks up to you. So, you deserve to forgive yourself, because I'm sure everyone else has already forgiven you."

Clay smiled into his hair, bringing the boy closer to his chest. "You said the same thing to me that day in the woods."

"I did?" George pondered, probably attempting to recall a memory he would be unable to remember. "Well then, drunk me is wise as hell." Clay laughed gently, hugging George tighter. George yawned against him, and Clay could tell the other was beginning to drift off to sleep, his breathing beginning to slow. He brought the smaller boy closer to his chest, relishing the way he could feel George's heartbeat against his.

"You always know exactly what to say to make me feel better. You like...patch me up with your words, or something," Clay spoke softly, his words not even making sense to his ears as sleep began to overtake him, too. He wasn't sure if George was still even awake at this point, his words being spoken into the darkness. "You're my patch. You fix me."

George's grip on the back of Clay's shirt tightened, indicating that he had heard him.

"I can't fix you, Clay," George mumbled against his chest. "You don't need fixing."

A few moments passed, and as George's breathing evened out, Clay realized the other had finally fallen asleep. He pressed a chaste kiss on the top of the sleeping boy's head, curling closer to him before letting his own eyes drift shut.

In a whisper, just before the grip of sleep has taken him under, Clay admitted, "Then, you make me better."



George was awoken up by a strange noise, his eyes slowly sliding open. He was disoriented for a moment in the darkness of the room before taking note of arms wrapped tightly around him. He panicked for only a moment before remembering he had fallen asleep in Clay's arms.

He glanced up at Clay, expecting to see a serene expression, only to be met with anything but. Clay's face was contorted in a sort of grimace, his eyes darting behind closed lids, his breathing growing ragged. A whimper escaped his lips, and George realized that was the sound he had heard. The strange noise that had woken him up.

"No," Clay gasped out, his hold on George tightening, his expression pained. George noticed that tears were beginning to collect at the corner of his eyes.

Clay was having a nightmare.

"Clay," George whispered, gently shaking him. Clay merely flinched, mumbling something unintelligible in his sleep. "Clay, wake up."

"George," Clay mumbled, making George freeze. "George. Not you, please. I'm sorry. I'm sorr..." Tears were rolling down Clay's cheeks now, and the sight alone broke George's heart.

"Clay, wake up. It's not real," George spoke a little louder this time, shaking him by the shoulders. When Clay didn't stir, George placed both hands on either side of Clay's face. "Dream!"

Clay let out a soft gasp as his eyes flew open, looking around in disorientation before they focused down on George. Tears welled up in his eyes all over again, spilling over as his brows furrowed. His whole body shivered. "George."

"I'm here. It's okay. You're okay," George murmured softly, drying Clay's tears with gentle sweeps of his thumb. Clay's mouth quivered.

"George, you were...in my dream, you—"

"I know. I know, but it wasn't real. I'm right here. I'm okay," George continued reassuring Clay gently, reaching forward to press a kiss on Clay's cheek where a tear had just escaped his panicked eyes. Clay leaned into the touch, letting his eyes fall shut as he let out a shaky breath at the action. George continued kissing every tear that fell down his face, Clay shuddering against him, his grip on the small of George's back tightening, though George didn't mind.

"I'm sorry for waking you," Clay murmured in a broken voice that made George's heart squeeze painfully. George pulled back a bit, looking him directly in the eyes.

"Don't ever apologize for that again, okay?" George whispered as Clay looked at him with wide eyes. "Promise me. There's nothing to apologize for."

"Okay. I promise," Clay responded quietly as George pressed another kiss on his drying cheek, close enough to his mouth that when George leant in for a second one, Clay moved his face slightly so George would capture his lips instead. They kissed gently, their lips moving together slowly, and George felt Clay sigh in relief against him, making his heart squeeze for a second time.

Finally, Clay pulled back first, bringing George tightly against his chest and pressing a kiss to the top of his head. In a low voice, he said, "Thank you, George. I'm alright now. You can go back to sleep."

George nodded against him before letting his eyes drift shut again as both boy's breathing evened out, their hearts beating in tangent, and they slept through the rest of the night without another stir.



Clay's eyes slid open against the sun filtering into the room. He peered down at the figure curled up against him, still clearly asleep. George's arms were wrapped around him almost protectively and Clay's heart skipped happily at the sight.

He pressed a kiss to the top of the boy's bedhead only to cause George to stir, the Brit curling up closer against him before his eyes blinked open, peering up at Clay through squinted, still sleepy eyes.

"Good morning," Clay whispered, his voice rough from disuse.

"Good morning," George echoed in a groggy voice, making Clay smile.

"Happy Valentine's Day," Clay added, watching as George's eyes widened a bit in realization.

"Oh, yeah. Happy Valentine's Day," he replied, before letting out a ferocious yawn that had Clay stifling back a laugh. A dopey smile stretched on George's lips. "Ready to adopt a cat?"

"I thought you had forgotten about that," Clay said honestly. George shook his head.

"Nope. It's happening. And after, we will come back home and watch *Interstellar*."

"Your memory works really well in the worst possible moments."

With a Cheshire grin, George said, "I'm not letting myself forget anything else ever again."



Once the two boys had gotten changed and were ready to leave the house, George hung back for a moment, suddenly remembering something as he pulled the drawer beside his nightstand open. Clay watched him curiously from the doorway, his eyes widening as they landed on the white clout goggles George pulled out from it.

"You kept them?" Clay spoke in awe as George turned to smile at him sheepishly.

"Yeah. I kept forgetting to give them to you before, so I figured now was a good time as any to return them," George said, walking up to Clay to place the white shades in his open palms. Clay clutched them tightly, his mind drifting back to the party when he placed the shades onto George in this very house. He came to a decision, lifting the goggles to place them on the bridge of George's nose.

"Keep them," Clay grinned softly at the way George blinked up at him in surprise. "They look better on you, anyway."

"Are you sure?"

"More than anything," Clay reassured, before he remembered something himself. "Oh, actually, I have something else for you."

Clay took hold of George's hand, leading a confused George out of the room and down the stairs of the house. He reached the place where he had dropped his backpack near the entrance, releasing George's hand to kneel down and zip it open. He got out a brown box with a red string-like design etched onto the top cover, getting back to his feet to hold it out to a wide-eyed George.

"I got you some chocolate truffles yesterday," Clay smiled shyly, fidgeting in place. "You like chocolate, right? I wasn't even sure if you liked chocolate but then I thought, well, everyone likes chocolate. But then I remembered my older sister is a weirdo and she despises chocolate, so then I was worried you might *also* be one of those people. Not that I'm calling you weird, though honestly, if you *don't* like chocolate that *is* pretty weird, so I guess I *am* calling you weird, you weirdo."

"Dream."

"Oh shit, wait, chocolate melts, doesn't it. Would chocolate melt overnight? It was in my backpack since I got here yesterday because I didn't want to take it out and ruin the surprise, but the house was pretty hot last night, right? Oh god, I'm sorry, George, it's probably all melted already—"

"Dream!"

"I should've just gotten you the flowers, but I thought that would've been overkill if I got you flowers since they're super cheesy and those probably would've wilted overnight anyway and I'm not even sure you would have appreciated—"

Clay was cut off when George grabbed him by the collar and pulled him downwards, smashing their lips together. Clay let out a tiny squeak of surprise before he melted into the kiss, his free hand encircling George's waist and bringing the other boy closer to him. George pulled back a bit, still holding Clay down by his collar so he wouldn't put more distance between them by standing straight, their lips still centimeters away from brushing if either of them were to make the slightest movement. He gazed up at Clay with an equally amused and fond smile on his features.

"Thank you for the truffles," George spoke gently, practically against Clay's lips. A shiver ran down Clay's spine as he looked down at the smaller boy in absolute adoration.

"Of course. I hope you like them," Clay murmured back, willing his knees not to buckle. Finally, George put necessary distance between them again, taking the box of chocolate truffles out of Clay's hand to take to the kitchen. Clay had to tear his gaze away to not watch George's retreating figure, swallowing roughly past his suddenly parched throat.

"Ready to go?" George called once he returned from the kitchen. A genuine smile stretched on Clay's face then as he nodded excitedly, making George giggle at his reaction before the two were out the door and clambering into Clay's car.



They ended up adopting a kitten.

Clay would swear it was love at first sight. George would call him an idiot for saying that but wouldn't disagree.

After making a few stops to buy cat food and cat litter along with anything else George claimed a cat would need, they headed to the nearest shelter. Once they got there, they filled out an application and were interviewed by the shelter owner to make sure Clay would be a good owner to the pet he were to choose. Finally, they were led into the back room where all the shelter's animals were being kept.

There was a female kitten behind one of the cages that was sound asleep. George had approached the cage first, Clay idling just behind him, and they had both watched as the kitten's eyes slowly slid open until it was peering up at George curiously. The kitten's fur was a light brown with darker stripes covering her face and back. There was a white patch of fur between her eyes and beneath her mouth, stretching down the course of her stomach. Her paws were white, as though the kitten were wearing cute, little mittens.

"This one looks like you," George mumbled absentmindedly. Clay turned towards him, startled by his statement. George added, "I can't see the actual color, but her eyes look like yours." Clay glanced at the kitten, taking in her green eyes that were solely trained on George. Green eyes that were so much like his own.

"Yeah, I guess so," Clay hummed as the kitten turned to look directly at him. The kitten's green eyes dilated, and Clay felt himself begin to crumble.

"Someone brought her in a few days ago," the shelter attendant said beside them, though Clay's and George's attention remained on the kitten still staring at them. "She was found in a box that was tossed in a dumpster. People can be so cruel."

"That's horrible," Clay agreed, feeling a pang of sympathy for the innocent kitty that did not deserve to be treated like trash. He knelt down beside George to get a closer look at the kitten, watching as her mouth opened in a yawn and her whole body stretched with the movement. She slowly got up, hesitantly creeping closer to the two of them. After a few moments, she stuck her paw out at them through the cage, letting out a soft mewl.

Clay swore she was telling them, "Get me out of here. Take me home."

"Let's adopt her," Clay blurted out, his hand coming up to tentatively reach for her little paw. She pressed her paw onto his hand softly, and that was all he needed to know she would be coming home with him. "We'll take her."

George hadn't refuted him or told him to look at the other cats in the shelter before making a decision. He had merely given Clay a soft smile and turned back to play with the kitten through the bars of the cage. Clay is pretty sure it was because George had fallen in love with the kitten, too.

To Clay's surprise, the shelter attendant didn't ask them for any extra information before adopting her, nor did she mind that they weren't even 18. She said that she could tell they were good people and the kitten would be going to a good home, and if Clay teared up a bit at her words, nobody mentioned it.

They paid the adoption fee and were given a simple cardboard carrier to take her home. The kitten was finally brought out, and when Clay took her in his arms, her paws clutched onto the fabric of his shirt, making his heart squeeze. He had only just met her an hour prior, and already he could feel how much this little kitten would mean to him. How she would make him feel like nothing was wrong in the world.

In that sense, she was a lot like someone else he knew.

As they were driving back to Karl's house, George asked Clay what he planned on calling her. Clay glanced at George briefly before a soft smile etched itself onto his features.

"I was thinking of naming her after someone but keeping it subtle. What are your thoughts on 'Patches?'"

Clay didn't miss the way George's eyes widened the slightest bit as a blush bloomed on his cheeks. He coughed slightly, feigning ignorance as he turned to instead stare out the window. "That's a, uh, cute name."

Clay smiled wider as his attention returned to the road ahead of them. In the backseat, Patches continued to nap in her carrier, oblivious to the new name she had been given.

Once they arrived at Karl's house, George roped Dream into finally watching *Interstellar* with him, though it didn't take much convincing. They watched it together with Patches napping on their laps, and Clay's heart would squeeze happily anytime he would glance over at George and see him looking down at Patches with an incredibly fond smile.

When Clay arrived at his own home later that evening, he was met with a wide variety of reactions from Wilbur, his siblings, and his mom. None of them, however, refused to welcome Patches to her new forever home.

And if George used the excuse of visiting Patches to start coming over to Clay's house any chance he could, slowly integrating himself into Clay's family as a result, Clay said nothing of it. To him, it was like heaven had heard his prayers and made his deepest wishes come true.

## Chapter End Notes

"If you yawn because someone else yawns, that means you love them." (George's logic from that one stream idek how long ago where Dream teased him for mimicking his yawn)

on other more unimportant news, my college art class is killing me slowly

- Kirbs -

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